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ABSTRACT

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has proposed a 10-year campaign to enable the country to meet the national education goal of having every child start school ready to learn. The campaign has a 7-step agenda. First, every child must have a healthy birth, and be well-nourished and well-protected in the early years of life. The second step involves parent education and empowerment. Parents must provide their children with a secure environment that encourages language development. Third, high quality preschool programs that provide good care and address all dimensions of school readiness must be available. Fourth, workplace policies must be flexible in meeting families' needs, supplying child care services, and giving parents time with their young children. The fifth step involves the development of educational and enriching television programming. The sixth step calls for neighborhoods to provide children with safe places for play and learning. Finally, intergenerational programs that give children a sense of security and continuity must be implemented. Recommendations related to each of the seven steps are offered. Appendixes include the results of a 1991 survey of kindergarten teachers and technical notes concerning the survey. (BC)

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READY TO LEARN

A Mandate for the Nation

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AMERICA'S FIRST GOAL



America's First Goal

READINESS FOR ALL

America is losing sight of its children. In decisions made every day we are placing them at the very bottom of the agenda with grave consequences for the future of the nation. It is simply intolerable that millions of children in this country are physically and emotionally disadvantaged in ways that restrict their capacity to learn, especially when we know what a terrible price will be paid for such neglect, not just educationally, but in human terms, as well.

For nearly a decade, education has been a top priority of the nation. Graduation requirements have been raised. Teaching standards have been tightened and student assessment has become a major new priority for our schools. A host of bold innovations—"teacher empowerment," "school-based management," "parental choice," "new schools for a new century"—have been proposed in quick succession. And most consequentially, perhaps, governors and corporate leaders have become vigorous advocates of school reform.

The quality of education and the nation's future are inseparably related. It's through a network of public and private schools that this nation has chosen to pursue enlightened ends for all its citizens. People who cannot communicate are powerless. People who know nothing of their past are culturally impoverished. People who cannot see beyond the confines of their own lives are ill-equipped to face the future. And without quality education, America cannot remain economically competitive in world markets. Academic excellence, unquestionably, must remain high on the national agenda.

But while focusing on schools, *children* have somehow been forgotten. In our reach for excellence, we have ignored the fact that to improve the schools, a solid foundation must be laid. We have failed to recognize that the family may be a more imperiled institution than the school, and that many of education's failures may relate to problems that precede schooling, and even birth itself. We have not sufficiently acknowledged that if children do not have a good beginning, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to compensate fully for that failure later on.

This is something many have observed. During the second week of school, at a hurried twenty-minute lunch break, a veteran kindergarten teacher gave us these impressions: "The year is off to a good start," she said, "but I worry about what's going on outside the school, in neighborhoods and homes. I've noticed in the last few years that children's lives are not running smoothly. A lot of them seem anxious. I have some who come to school hungry. I know that sometimes they're abused, don't get the strong support they need at home, and frankly, I really fear for the future of these children—and their families."¹

It is children then—not just the schools—who should be the focus of our concern. Policymakers must look beyond the schoolhouse door and consider what is happening to childhood itself. We must recognize that if children are to perform successfully in school, what they need is not just more assessment, but more compassion and support. What we must offer them is not just a restructured school, but assurances that they belong.

And yet this comes at a time when America seems to have lost a sense of shared purpose, when what it means to "belong" is, itself, in question. Family life is under stress. In neighborhoods and towns, the spirit of community has been replaced by divisions that imperil the quality of life and tear the very fabric of our nation. Meanwhile, our most pressing problems go unresolved. Commentator Daniel Yankelovich, in discussing America's separateness and dislocations, refers to the "giant plates" of the culture that have been shifting, creating disorientation in basic values and beliefs, and diminishing our commitment to the common good.²

With so much in question, one point is clear: If America hopes to secure its future, children must come first. Children are, after all, our most precious resource, and if we as a nation cannot commit ourselves to help the coming generation, if we cannot work together compassionately to ensure that every child is well prepared for learning, and for life, then what *will* pull us all together?

The good news is that our national priorities may be shifting. In his second State of the Union message, President George Bush announced six ambitious goals for all the nation's schools that ranged from reducing the number of school dropouts to achieving literacy for all adults. Every one of the new goals is consequential. Each should be vigorously pursued.

But it is the *first* goal that stands out above all the rest. By the year 2000, the President declared—all children in America will start school "ready to learn"—a bold, hugely optimistic proposition. Still, dreams can be fulfilled only when they have been defined. And if we as a nation can, indeed, ensure that every child is well prepared for school, it seems reasonable to expect that all of the other goals will, in large measure, be fulfilled.

What is so encouraging about the first education goal—the part we find so refreshing—is that the school reform movement, which for years has been searching for the right ending, suddenly has been given a challenging new beginning. We are being asked to focus on intervention, not remediation. It is, after all, in the early years when a child's curiosity is most keen. This is the time when the natural enthusiasm for learning is at its freshest. And creating a world in which every child, from birth, is well nourished, well protected, and intellectually challenged is, in the end, what excellence in education is all about.

While the nation is getting all children ready for school, schools surely have an obligation to get ready for the children—to accept, with hope and enthusiasm, every child who comes to the schoolhouse door, to believe in his or her potential, and with skill and optimism help each one become a creative, energetic learner. Any effort to hold children back, or place them in boxes, or label them winners or losers must be vigorously rejected.

Still, the sad fact is that vast numbers of our children experience crippling deprivations before school that dramatically dampen their prospects for educational success. Too many are "destined for school failure because of poverty, neglect, sickness, handicapping conditions, and lack of adult protection and nurturance," as educational researcher Harold Hodgkinson put it.³ In a similarly sobering assessment, the Southern Regional Education Board, after evaluating students' prospects, concluded: "Today not all children are ready to begin the first grade. Too many never catch up. Unless additional steps are taken, possibly one-third . . . entering the first grade will not be ready to do so in the year 2000."⁴

In the summer of 1991, we surveyed more than seven thousand kindergarten teachers across the nation to learn from them about the school readiness of children. Teachers were, it seemed to us, an important point of reference. They are, after all, with dozens of youngsters every day. They watch their reactions, observe their relationships with

others, note their struggles and successes, and often have a keen, almost intuitive understanding of children's needs. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to ask kindergarten teachers about the readiness of their children, focusing on the six areas that are so essential to school success: physical well-being, social confidence, emotional maturity, language richness, general knowledge, and moral awareness.

The responses were deeply troubling, ominous really. According to these kindergarten teachers, 35 percent of the nation's children—nearly one and a half million in all—are not fully ready to participate successfully in formal education. Further, when teachers were asked how the readiness of their students last year compared to those who enrolled five years ago, 42 percent said the situation has gotten worse; only 25 percent said it's better. When asked to identify the areas in which students were most deficient, language proficiency was judged the biggest problem by teachers. In response to the question, "What would most improve the school readiness of children?", teachers overwhelmingly said "parent education."

Children are *always* learning. From the moment of birth, they look and listen and discover their world, extending their horizons. Childhood is a time of boundless exploration. It's in the early years when children discover new words, new friends, and new places that offer them a window to the vast world that lies before them. Thus, in speaking of "readiness to learn," what we really mean is preparing a child for formal schooling.

What we find so shocking is that such a high number of kindergarten students come to school educationally, socially, and emotionally not well prepared. It is really unacceptable that some children "do not even know where they live, cannot identify colors, and are unable to recite their full and proper name," which is what one kindergarten teacher told us.⁵ Another teacher made this observation: "Too many of my children come to school hungry. They are tired or in need of much love and attention. More and more students are coming with deep emotional problems that interfere with their learning."⁶

A third teacher wrote: "It is so sad to realize just how many children are *not* ready to learn when they come to school. They *deserve* to know by age five their full name and the name of the town where they live. They need to know that a pencil is something they write with—not eat—and that someone believes in them, no matter what!"⁷

Kirsten Sonquist, a kindergarten teacher in Minneapolis and a mother of four, wrote this note at the bottom of our questionnaire: "Children need to be healthy in mind, soul, and body to be ready to learn. They need more laptime with their parents so they know they are loved. They need to know for sure that there will be a roof over their heads and food on the table tomorrow. Here in Minnesota, they need mittens and boots in the winter. These things should be basic rights," she added, "but today they are not guaranteed to all children."

Surely, America has within its power the means to make the earliest years enriching and productive for all our children. But whose responsibility is it to assure the school readiness of children? Who should take the lead in seeing to it that every child receives not just food, protection, and love, but also the guidance needed to succeed in school and to proceed confidently in life?

We begin, where we must, with parents. When all is said and done, mothers and fathers are the child's first and most important teachers. It is in the home that children must be clothed, fed, and loved. This is the place where life's most basic lessons are learned. No outside program—no surrogate or substitute arrangement, however well planned or well intended—can replace a supportive family that gives the child human bonding and a rich environment for learning.

Still, parents cannot do the job alone. Here in America, the family is so often portrayed as heroically self-sufficient, capable of solving every crisis in quick, thirty-minute segments—as in the popular TV sitcoms "Leave It to Beaver," "The Brady Bunch," or "Father Knows Best." But that's just not the way it works. While cherishing their privacy and freedom, parents have, in good times and in bad, always sought support.

Once children were born at home with neighbors and midwives in attendance. Family doctors made house calls. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins often stopped by for casual conversation. Neighbors watched over kids and patched up cuts and bruises. The corner grocer kept an eye out for trouble. Pastors, priests, and rabbis ministered at times of joy and grief. This loosely organized network of support—spreading outward from the extended family—was quite informal, even unreliable at times. Still, when parents were anxious or confused, it was reassuring to have a circle of support.

Gradually, this protective ring was broken. Neighbors grew more distant, doors were bolted, friendliness was replaced by fear. Children were warned to avoid people they

didn't know. Relatives moved far away. Families became isolated and disconnected, struggling alone, and "reaching out to touch someone" meant pushing the buttons on a telephone. Modern life, which brought new options to parents, destabilized former certainties and weakened networks of support.

There is no evidence that parents have become any less caring for their children. They are deeply concerned about their well-being. Today's mothers and fathers, as much as any previous generation, worry in the dark of night about how to make their children happy and secure. What *has* changed are the pressures that many parents feel, the conflicts between work and family obligations that keep them on the go and out of touch. Time seems so limited, schedules so hectic, and parents feel caught in the crossfire of competing obligations.

Family members still lean on one another, especially in times of crisis. But increasingly parents must turn to outside agencies for help. They find themselves competing on unequal terms with impersonal institutions that not only play a much bigger role in family life, but even have begun to shape it. Child-care providers, counselors, even television personalities often are as influential in the lives of children as their parents. Sociologist Kenneth Keniston describes the contemporary parent as "a coordinator without voice or authority, a maestro trying to conduct an orchestra of players who have never met."⁹

Clearly, when it comes to helping children, a balance must be struck. No one imagines returning to a romanticized version of the isolated, self-reliant family. Nor is it realistic to assume that a flurry of new governmental initiatives can do it all. The time has come to move beyond the tired old "family versus government" debate and create a new network of support, a new kind of extended family—at once both reliable and compassionate, a special blend of public and private services for children.

The Ready-to-Learn goal offers America a shared vision around which everyone can rally, an opportunity for all of us, working together, to improve the prospects for every child. It is, after all, a pledge we have made not only to ourselves, but most especially to our children. And it is unethical to make promises to children and then walk away.

While responsibility for fulfilling this mandate begins with parents, it quickly reaches out to the workplace, to television, to neighborhoods, to state capitals, and to

Washington, D.C. But for this to be accomplished, we must all move beyond ourselves, recognizing "we are in truth members of one another," as Walter Lippmann said.¹⁰

Preparing all children for school requires imagination and will—not vast amounts of money. It calls for a determination on the part of all citizens to build a better world for children, moving them to the top of the agenda. Of course, resources also will be needed and several important federal initiatives must be taken. But helping children is in reality not an expenditure, but an investment. Further, failure to act surely will mean still higher costs later on in remedial education, unemployment, and crime—wasted lives, promises unfulfilled.

What we propose, then, is a decade-long campaign on behalf of children, one in which everyone is involved and no child is left out. Author Sylvia Ann Hewlett has made the point eloquently: "Throughout the ages people have striven for meaning that goes beyond the narrow scope of individual lives. . . . As we head toward the twenty-first century, we may well be ready to temper our autonomous, self-absorbed drive with a concern for others. Nothing is more worth doing than easing the pain and improving the life chances of vulnerable, blameless children."¹¹

What follows is our plan. In it we hope to answer seven basic questions, and in so doing, create a national Ready-to-Learn Agenda that touches on every aspect of our culture.

- How can we assure that all children have a healthy start?
- How can every child live in a supportive, language-rich environment, guided by empowered parents?
- How can we make available to all children quality child care that provides both love and learning?
- How can work and family life be brought together through workplace policies that support parents and give security to children?

- How can television become a creative partner in the school readiness campaign, offering preschool children new programming that is mind enriching?
- How can we give to every child a neighborhood for learning with spaces and places that invite play and spark the imagination?
- How can we bring the old and young together with new intergenerational connections that provide a community of caring for every child?

The picture we draw on the pages that follow is, in reality, a picture of the child's world. We focus on the influences—of birth, of family, of day-care arrangements, of television, of neighborhoods, and of the older generation—that ultimately shape children's lives and will, in the end, either expand or diminish their prospects for success.

Our aim is to suggest how *all* Americans, acting together, can ensure that *all* children will be ready to succeed in school. But above all, we seek to enrich the life of every child. Only then can America's future be secure.

NOTES

1. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
2. Daniel Yankelovich, *New Rules: Searching for Self Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Random House, 1981), 249.
3. Harold Hodgkinson, "Reform Versus Reality," *Phi Delta Kappan*, September 1991, 10.
4. Southern Regional Education Board, *Goals for Education: Challenge 2000*, 1988, 5.
5. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
6. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers*, 1991.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Kenneth Keniston and The Carnegie Council on Children, *All Our Children* (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1977), 18.
10. Walter Lippmann, *The Good Society* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1937), 348.
11. Sylvia Ann Hewlett, *When The Bough Breaks: The Cost of Neglecting Our Children* (Basic Books, 1991), 282-283.

AN AGENDA FOR ACTION



The First Step

A HEALTHY START

"In every child who is born," James Agee wrote, "under no matter what circumstances, and of no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again."¹ Last year, more than 4,200,000 babies were born in the United States, representing the highest annual birthrate in the last thirty years.² The quality of care these children get during the first months and years of life will profoundly shape their readiness for school. Every child must have a healthy birth, be well nourished each day, and physically well protected in the early years of life, if they are to be ready to learn. Good health and good schooling are inextricably interlocked.

Children are our most precious resource. Their well-being is bound to the well-being of us all. To neglect anything that will improve their chances in school and life is simply foolhardy, since to invest in children is to invest in the future of the nation. Yet many come to school with preventable physical ailments, hearing and sight problems, emotional disturbances that prevent concentration, and even nutritional deficiencies that limit their ability to learn.

If there is *one* right that *every* child can claim, it is the right to a healthy start. In response, we propose a three-pronged strategy to improve the health prospects for all children. First, to improve access to basic health care for mothers and babies, we recommend a national network of Ready-to-Learn Clinics that combine health and education. Second, we propose that the federal nutrition program for women, infants, and children, better known as WIC, be fully funded. Third, as a long-term strategy, we call for a comprehensive health education program in every school to educate tomorrow's parents.

During this century, child health has undergone a remarkable transformation. Dreaded diseases—typhoid fever, diphtheria, tuberculosis, polio—have been largely conquered. The contamination of milk, which once killed thousands of children, is now effectively controlled. Mumps and measles still threaten children, but are, at least, no longer

epidemics. Today, the odds of a child in the United States dying from disease or injury are one-half of what they were in 1950.³

Still, rejoicing should be muted. Despite miraculous medical advances, large numbers of babies are physically deprived in ways that diminish their quality of life and restrict their capacity to learn. While no child in America should live a single day with the pangs of hunger, it is shameful that nearly half a million children in this nation are malnourished and that twelve million are hungry some time every month.⁴ Further, studies show that *fetal* malnutrition affects 3 to 10 percent of babies, and while certain effects of nutritional deprivation are reversible, damage caused by lack of nourishment during the twelfth to twenty-fourth weeks of gestation, a time critical to brain growth, is not reversible.⁵

Infants whose mothers have not had good health care during pregnancy are more likely to be physically at-risk and intellectually deficient,⁶ yet one-quarter of all pregnant women in the United States receive belated prenatal care, or none at all.⁷ Still worse, the percentage of women receiving inadequate or substandard care has been growing.⁸ Author Lisbeth B. Schorr observes: "The United States is virtually alone among nations—and absolutely alone among Western industrial democracies—in its grudging approach to the provision of maternity care. Government in the United States has . . . never assumed responsibility for assuring that every pregnant woman gets the health care she needs to maximize the chances of a healthy birth."⁹

Good health begins before birth, during the months of gestation. As one researcher put it: "At no time does the well-being of one individual so directly depend on the well-being of another."¹⁰ What the pregnant woman eats and drinks is crucial, as protein deficiency during pregnancy can permanently impair learning ability through a decrease in the number of brain neurons.¹¹ Further, when an expectant mother takes just one dose of drugs, the fetus in the amniotic sac is bathed in drugs for days.¹² And fetal exposure to alcohol increases the child's risk of language deficiency and mental retardation. Even before conception, drug-use by the mother or father may tragically damage the unborn child.

Mothers who smoke during pregnancy place their child at risk for low birthweight, asthma, and growth retardation.¹³ Children of smokers also tend to lag behind their peers in cognitive development and educational achievement and are particularly subject to hyperactivity and inattention (table 1). Further, the effect of smoking is

cumulative. Children of heavy smokers score lower on verbal tests than children of lighter smokers or nonsmokers.¹⁴

TABLE 1
Cigarette Smoking During Pregnancy and Its Impact
on School Failure and Learning Disability by Age Seven

	<u>Learning Disability¹⁵</u>	<u>School Failure¹⁶</u>	<u>Repeat Grade</u>	<u>Special Class</u>
No cigarette smoking during pregnancy	3%	7%	6%	1%
One-half pack per day	4	8	7	1
One pack per day	4	8	7	1
Two packs per day	4	9	8	1
More than two packs per day	5	11	10	3

SOURCE: Education Commission of the States.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) recently reported that around forty thousand babies per year are born with fetal alcohol effects resulting from alcohol use during pregnancy. About seven thousand of these infants have fetal alcohol syndrome, a severe condition that results in major retardation. Another thirty-three thousand suffer less severe effects, including problems with attention span, speech and language, and hyperactivity. School failure is often connected to a history of fetal alcohol exposure.¹⁷

The abuse of drugs of all kinds—marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, or amphetamines—during pregnancy affects about 11 percent of newborns every year,

425,000 in 1988, according to ECS. Cocaine and crack use during pregnancy are consistently associated with lower birthweight, lower gestational age, and smaller head circumference in comparison with babies whose mothers were free of these drugs. In addition, women who use these substances are likely to smoke and to gain less weight during pregnancy, both of which are associated with low birthweight.¹⁸

The tragedy is that so many of the nation's youth—tomorrow's parents—are shockingly uninformed about how the lifestyle of one generation affects so profoundly the physical well-being of the next. Many young children abuse their bodies with drugs and wrong foods. And according to author Dr. Kenneth H. Cooper, many youngsters no longer get adequate exercise as they are less likely than children in the past to ride bicycles or walk to school and more likely to watch television and play video games than play outside. As a result, students today are six pounds heavier and a minute slower at running a mile than their counterparts of only a decade ago.¹⁹

As children grow older, bad health habits grow, too. There is, for example, an alarming pattern of substance abuse among young people in this country that is detrimental to their bodies, and later, to their babies. For years the increase in smoking has been greatest among young women.²⁰ Further, according to the most recent survey of high-school seniors, 91 percent have used alcohol, 66 percent have smoked cigarettes, 44 percent have tried marijuana, and 31 percent have experimented with an illicit drug other than marijuana (table 2).²¹ One urban teacher told us: "Today's students take far better care of their stereos than they do their own bodies. And what's so sad is that later on they'll pass on this abusive behavior to their own children."

Table 2

High School Seniors in the Class of 1989
Who Have Used Various Drugs

<u>Drug type</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Alcohol	91%
Cigarettes	66
Marijuana/Hashish	44
Illicit drugs other than marijuana	31
Cocaine	10
Crack	5

SOURCE: National Institute on Drug Abuse. 1991.

Given these health problems among older youth, it is perhaps no surprise to find a wide array of health deficits among very young children. In a national survey of teachers conducted by The Carnegie Foundation, in fact, more than half of the respondents said that "poor nourishment" among students is a problem at their school. Sixty percent cited "poor health" as a problem.²² One teacher in a midsize city observed: "Every year there seem to be more physical problems at our school that interfere with learning. I know that children who don't eat well or don't get rest can't do well in school. Yet, that's exactly what I'm seeing more and more." A kindergarten teacher said: "An increasing number of children who come to school have attention problems that I'm being told relate to poor nutrition and deficiencies in their diet."

This nation simply must find ways to interrupt the cycle of ignorance about exercise and nutrition that ultimately has such tragic consequences for our children. Today's students are tomorrow's parents and they need to know the facts of health, as well as the facts of life. Some schools do have "mini-units" on health and "family life" problems.

But the material taught is often too little, too late, and too irrelevant to students' questions and needs. "What we need is a *national* policy," says Ramon Cortinez, superintendent of schools in San Francisco, "one that supports comprehensive school health education."²³

Specifically, we propose that every school district offer a new health course as a requirement for high school graduation, with units of study threaded through the whole curriculum, from kindergarten to grade twelve. In the proposed new curriculum—called, perhaps, "The Life Cycle"—wellness and prevention would be the central, integrating themes. Some units of study could be taught as separate subjects, and others woven into history, science, and physical education. As students progress from grade to grade, they would learn to respect the sanctity of their own bodies—to appreciate the mystery of birth, the nurturing of life, the imperative of death. They would begin very early to reflect on the awesome responsibility of bringing a new life into the world.

One comprehensive health curriculum designed by the New York Academy of Medicine illustrates the kind of program we have in mind. A unit of study called "Growing Healthy" introduces elementary-school students to such topics as personal health, family life, emotional health and self-esteem, and the effects of smoking, drugs, and alcohol. "Being Healthy," a health curriculum for middle-school students, focuses on adolescent growth and development, nutrition, fitness, and AIDS. It includes units called "Family Living" and "Nutrition for Life."²⁴

Another model curriculum, called "Education for Parenting" based in Philadelphia, introduces students to the responsibilities and rewards of parenting. Classroom teachers give the students—tomorrow's parents—an understanding of one of life's greatest challenges: raising children. "Education for Parenting" has been working with schools across the nation for a dozen years, with impressive results. Myriam Miedziam, a professor at Columbia University, commented on the program's impact: "Regardless of how much detail these boys and girls remember by the time they become parents . . . the course has imbued them with a deep sense of the importance of parenting. Children get a sense of the reality of parenting, of the sacrifices and demands as well as the joys."²⁵

Health education in the schools, if properly organized, can truly make a difference, not only increasing a student's knowledge about health, but their own physical well-being.

too.²⁶ According to a study by the Rand Corporation, eighteen weeks of instruction, with subsequent "booster" lessons, can produce a significant decrease in smoking and other drug use. In South Carolina, a health education program was credited with reducing adolescent pregnancies. In Minnesota, health education reduced the numbers of students who started smoking. And yet another study revealed that the percentage of students using alcohol dropped from 43 to 33 percent after health instruction, and smoking decreased from 33 to 14 percent (table 3). The Centers for Disease Control found that health practices changed after only thirty hours of instruction. "The evidence that health education works is overwhelming," concluded a National Health Education Consortium report, "but national policy is needed."²⁷

Table 3

Students Who Reported They "Often" or "Sometimes" Used
Various Substances After One and Three Years of Health Education

	<u>After One Year</u>	<u>After Three Years</u>
Alcohol	43%	33%
Cigarettes	33	14
Drugs	13	5

SOURCE: National Health/Education Consortium, The Metropolitan Life Insurance Foundation.

To spread the benefits of health education, we propose that each student participate in an "each-one-teach-one" project, passing along to family and friends what they have learned in school, thus expanding the prospects of good health. There is, we believe, a successful precedent for this suggestion. At the turn of the century, an epidemic swept through New York City, and thousands of babies died. The public schools, in response to the crisis, organized a health course for high school girls, instructing them in how to care for babies. The participating students, called "Little Mothers," became health teachers in their own homes. Each participant received an "honor badge" and was

made to understand that she had a weighty obligation to aid in saving babies' lives.²⁸ What we envision is a modern-day version of the student health corps that was so effectively organized nearly a century ago—one that involves both young men and young women in promoting good health for infants.

Educating students about health and about what it means to be a parent is a long-term strategy, but it must be started now. Another urgent problem that must be addressed immediately is that of inadequate nutrition among many mothers and babies. Research clearly establishes that if a pregnant woman does not eat well, her nutritional deficiency can interfere with the fetus' development, increasing the possibility that the baby will be malformed or become mentally or physically retarded.²⁹ Yet, in the United States today, literally hundreds of thousands of expectant mothers are malnourished, and millions of preschool children go day after day without the nutrition they need for good health and effective learning.

The WIC program, which was signed into law by President Nixon in 1972, was established precisely to meet that need. Currently it serves nearly four million children and mothers every month. Milk, cheese, eggs, cereal, and baby formula are distributed through eight thousand service centers all across the country.³⁰ WIC also provides nutrition education to low-income women who are pregnant or breast-feeding. The program has proven to be successful in raising birthweights, reducing infant mortality, improving vocabulary scores, and bringing low-income mothers into prenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy.³¹ Mothers and children who are at the greatest risk—those who are poor, members of minority group, and poorly educated—benefit the most.³²

Despite WIC's success, however, millions of mothers and babies, year after year, are denied access to the program, and today one million eligible mothers and three million children are left unserved. As Winston Churchill said on one occasion, "there is no finer investment for any community than putting milk into babies."³³ Surely the time has come for this country to ensure that all mothers and babies are well fed. Specifically, we propose that as a national imperative, WIC—the federal nutrition program for women and children—be fully funded. And because funding this program to serve all who need it is a moral imperative, the appropriations for the program should be increased from \$2.5 to \$4.5 billion.³⁴

But increasing funding for the program is not enough. To contribute to the national ready-to-learn goal, we also recommend that the educational component of WIC be strengthened. When mothers first register for the program, they are supposed to receive not just good nutrition but parenting education, too. The problem is that most offices are overburdened and the teaching component is often cursory, at best. This opportunity for education should be seized. We propose, therefore, that every WIC office sponsor a "parent seminar series" that covers the full range of child development—from physical well-being to social and moral development.

Beyond educating future parents and ensuring that mothers and babies are well nourished, the single most important factor in improving the health prospects of children—the one that will make the greatest difference—is ensuring that every mother has access to quality health care for herself and for her child. Such care should be guaranteed. Pregnant mothers simply must have access to quality prenatal care, including good nutrition that begins in the first trimester to ensure that the fetus is supplied with adequate protein and not damaged by alcohol or drugs. The period *before* birth is critically linked to a child's capacity to learn. Consider that a healthy fetus, by the sixth month, has already developed ten billion neurons, nearly the full number needed for total brain development.³⁵

Yet a host of barriers stands between pregnant women and good health care. Cost is one obstacle. It is estimated that more than nine million women of reproductive age have no health insurance of any kind.³⁶ Medicaid, authorized by Congress in 1965, provides health coverage for 27.3 million people, and looks after, among others, 158,000 severely impaired crack babies born every year.³⁷ Although Medicaid has been expanded in recent years, 1.5 million children under the age of six are not covered by it or any other form of insurance.³⁸ Expanding insurance, therefore, is an important first step for improving health care for mothers and babies.

Even with universal health insurance, however, millions of women and children still would remain medically unserved because the *delivery* system is chaotic, offering services in a shockingly uneven and piecemeal fashion and discriminating against the poor. In rural America, where 20 percent of the population resides, hundreds of health clinics have closed in recent years.³⁹ For many, prenatal care is miles away—or nonexistent.⁴⁰ Veda Sharp of the Michigan Department of Health told us that "in many

rural communities in our state mothers may have to travel a hundred miles or more to get prenatal care." Even in our largest cities the number of office-based primary care physicians in pockets of poverty has actually decreased in the past twenty years, leaving many low-income mothers with no place to go.⁴¹ This is unacceptable.

Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, states with urgency the challenge America now confronts: "Children must have their basic needs for health care . . . and nutrition met if they are to be prepared to achieve in school. A child with an undiagnosed vision problem, or without the means to get glasses once a problem has been diagnosed, hardly can learn to his potential. A child whose intellectual development is stunted by lead poisoning cannot excel in the classroom. . . . Nor can a hungry child. . . . All of this is common sense. Any parent, any teacher, any doctor, any politician understands these connections. The puzzling thing is why we can't do what we all know makes sense, giving all children the essential and cost-effective early investments they need to prepare them to achieve."²

Many states and communities have begun to recognize the need for a more effective health-care infrastructure. In its sweeping School Reform Act of 1990, the Kentucky legislature authorized a network of "family service centers" to be located at or near schools to improve linkages between health services and families. Centers are to be placed in school districts where 20 percent of the children participate in the federal school-lunch program. Hawaii's "Project Healthy Start" has one-stop centers for children and families at-risk all over the state. The program also includes a home-visit plan to help parents under stress or with vulnerable infants. North Carolina's "Baby Love" program gives basic health care to pregnant women through "maternity care coordinators" who act as ombudsmen, guiding the client into the system. Results are impressive. In 1988, the infant mortality rate for women not in the program was 14.7 percent, for those in the program, it was 9.6 percent.

The Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center in Jackson, Mississippi, provides primary care services, acute sick-care, screening, and immunization to about four thousand preschoolers every year. The Center provides prenatal care and delivery, a birthing center, and nutrition counseling, as well as referrals to drug and alcohol treatment centers. A satellite health clinic located in a local high school is regarded as a model in community health care. But according to Dr. Aaron Shirley, the clinic's budget has been frozen for the last five years, at the same time that they are "seeing more and more patients in poverty who can pay only 20 to 40 percent of the actual

costs, if that much. Poverty is increasing, but our funding is staying the same. Also, medical costs are rising. Our equipment is twenty years old, but we don't have enough money to make capital improvements. We have just enough to keep the door open."⁴³

"TW Cares" is a community health center in Denton, Texas, located in a low-income housing project where mostly single mothers and children live. The program was started two years ago by Texas Woman's University College of Nursing after the public hospital closed, leaving the low-income population with nowhere to go. Besides its programs aimed at educating families about health and wellness, the center helps patients who come into its clinic by referring them to providers of the services they need. If a child is sick they help find a doctor. If cases of abuse or neglect arise, they bring families into appropriate programs run by the police and the department of human services. There is also a dental clinic on-site where last year \$30,000-worth of services were donated. TW Cares works intimately with the local school, where one-third of the children are without insurance; by default, they go to the school nurse for help. The school nurse goes to TW Cares.

Clearly, we must define as a top priority a national system of health delivery that offers maternal care to all expectant mothers, especially the neediest. The National Governors' Association, in viewing the overall problem, states the case precisely: "If steps are not taken now to build a real health-care system, too many children will continue to come to school unprepared to learn, too many adolescents will continue to face serious but preventable health problems."⁴⁴ Specifically, we propose that America build a national network of "one-stop shopping" health and education centers to serve all low-income mothers and children. These centers, called Ready-to-Learn Clinics, would integrate health, education, and social services, building on the current system but making them more equitable.

Creating a *national* network of children's clinics—one that pulls together and extends the existing fragmented system—would, at first blush, seem to be a hugely complicated task. But this is something America can and indeed *must* do. Let's not forget that we created in this country a network of public schools—eighty-three thousand of them from Bangor, Maine, to Honolulu, Hawaii, serving more than forty-six million children. This was accomplished precisely because almost all members of society shared the conviction that educating every child was far too important to be left to chance.

No one would tolerate a prejudicial school system in which some children went off to be educated each morning while others had no place to go. How, then, can we tolerate, year after year, a system that denies health care to our children? We ensure access to education, but we do not ensure access to basic health care which is a *prerequisite* to education. It seems appropriate, therefore, that a national network of community health centers be created, modeled after the "common" schools. In communities where community health clinics already exist, services could be expanded. Where new ones are needed, they could be developed.

We propose that, in every community, the clinic should be in or near a public school. After all, the school is still one of the few institutions that is located conveniently in every neighborhood and has wide public trust. Additionally, most schools have unused space in the afternoon and on weekends. Just as they do in education, states should take the lead in ensuring that when it comes to health care every needy mother and child has a place to go. As voiced by the National Governor's Association in a recent report: "Governors cannot afford to wait for a national consensus . . . the costs of inaction are too high."⁴⁵

To begin the process of creating a network of community health centers, we propose that every state prepare a county-by-county Child Health Master Plan that would include the following elements: an inventory of the number of low-income mothers and children in every county in the state; a description of what services are needed to fill the health care gaps and increase existing health services in each county; and a plan for coordinating all health, education, and social services for mothers and preschool children. This plan would yield an integrated program for every county. And putting together the comprehensive plans from all fifty states would lay the foundation for a *national*, coast-to-coast network of Ready-to-Learn Clinics.

Once in place, a Ready-to-Learn Clinic would offer prenatal and maternal care, as well as health services to children up to age five, including regular checkups, routine screening for hearing and vision problems, and testing for lead poisoning, which the American Academy of Pediatricians recently labeled an "epidemic."⁴⁶ Protecting every child against childhood diseases through inoculation is also crucial. It is truly shocking that today, 20 percent of preschool children have not been vaccinated against polio, that the incidence of whooping cough is three times higher than it was a decade ago, and that the reported cases of measles has skyrocketed to more than twenty-six thousand in 1990.⁴⁷ Surely, this nation can accomplish something as simple and as

essential as protecting every child against contagious illness, serious disease, or perhaps even death (table 4).

TABLE 4
Preschool Children Who Have Completed Immunizations

	<u>Year</u>	<u>DTP^{40,46}</u>	<u>Measles⁵⁰</u>	<u>Polio^{51,52}</u>
United States	1985	64.9%	60.8%	55.3%
Belgium ⁴⁸	1987	95.0	90.0	99.0
Denmark	1987	94.0 ⁴⁴	82.0	100.0
France ⁴⁸	1986	97.0	55.0	97.0
Germany (FRG) ⁴⁸	1987	95.0	50.0	95.0
The Netherlands	1987	96.9	92.8	96.9
Norway	1987	80.0	87.0	80.0
Spain	1986	88.0	83.0	80.0
Switzerland	1986	90-98	60-70	95-98
England and Wales	1987	87.0 ⁴⁷	76.0	87.0

SOURCES: Bytchenko, 1988; USPHS, 1989; National Statistics Offices (Denmark, Netherlands, England, and Wales).

A special concern of the Ready-to-Learn Clinic would be to form and strengthen linkages between health and education. A parent-education program focusing on the *whole* child, for example, would be offered collaboratively with the WIC program, if it is administered by a separate office in the county. Above all, the Clinic would be very closely linked to the surrounding educational institutions. Further, to ensure ongoing collaboration, we urge that an interagency advisory council be formed to coordinate the Clinic's program with Head Start and the public schools. The goal is to ensure that those in the various institutions are working together toward common goals.

As for staffing, every Ready-to-Learn Clinic should be headed by a health professional—a nurse practitioner, professional midwife, or senior nurse. A private physician or public health officer would provide backup support. Ideally, the Clinic's staff also would include a social worker, a parent educator, and trained volunteers—retirees or college students, for example—to help with parent education, home visits, and transportation. In addition, every clinic should have a hotline service. In Wayne County, Michigan, for example, a mother or father can call a hotline and a counselor on the line tells the caller where to go for help.

The Ready-to-Learn Clinics will also focus on training parents and encouraging them in turn to teach other parents what they have learned. A Houston barrio program called "De Madres a Madres"—from mothers to mothers—has launched a vigorous attack on the problem of at-risk pregnancies among Hispanic women. Health care in Houston, as in many other parts of the country, is anything but a one-stop operation, and 40 percent of Hispanic women do not start prenatal care early enough, or do not start at all. To meet the need, De Madres a Madres draws on women volunteers in the neighborhood, gives them eight hours of training, tells them how to gain access to health care options, takes them to a neonatal intensive-care unit so they understand the consequences of inadequate prenatal care, and gives them some pointers for identifying and talking with pregnant women.

Currently, fifty women in the community—women who work as bank clerks, waitresses, and school cafeteria staff—serve as volunteers. In two years, these volunteers have contacted three thousand pregnant women, visiting them in their homes, accompanying them to fill out papers, and helping them keep up their spirits.

De Madres a Madres, located in a home in the neighborhood, serves as a center for the volunteers and is a reference point for those who need help. Among the clients whom the program has been able to track, not one has had a low-birthweight baby, and in their next pregnancy most begin prenatal care much earlier. Texas Woman's University supplied the research and educational resources to begin the program, but training now is done by the veteran volunteers. Student nurses from the College of Nursing take part in the program and there are plans to eventually include medical students, too.

One volunteer was asked, "Why do you do this? You have four children of your own, and it's time and energy away from your own life and family." Her answer was an incredulous, "Why would I *not* do this? I care about these women! I care about this

community!" This feeling of compassion for families, this public love of children, was once much more a part of the American conscience than it is today. Unless we can find ways to rekindle this spirit, neighborhood by neighborhood, community by community, we will fall far short of the goal we envision: a society of healthy children raised in a safe and loving environment.

To fund the Ready-to-Learn Clinics, the first step is to coordinate and make more efficient use of existing resources. The fragmented health services for mothers and children—at the local, state, and national levels—should be brought together to eliminate waste and duplication. Improved coordination would save literally millions of dollars, redirecting resources to people rather than paperwork. In one state, for example, we discovered that sixteen separate agencies were funding health projects for poor mothers and babies—and none of the offices knew what the others were doing.

Again, the goal is to increase support for existing programs, building on the present system. Specifically, we propose that the federal Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, which states use to fund local clinics, be increased from the current level of \$500 million to \$700 million. We recommend that funding for Community and Migrant Health Centers be expanded from the current \$530 million to \$680 million, with additional increases every year for the next ten years until all medically underserved people have access to quality care. Both of these programs, if well funded, would greatly enrich the current health-delivery system and make it more equitable with an expanded ready-to-learn mission.

As a final priority, we propose that the Federal Community Health Center program be fully funded and its mission broadened to fulfill the ready-to-learn objectives. In America today, nearly two thousand comprehensive community-based health clinics serve six million clients in all fifty states, offering high-quality primary care to patients who, because of major barriers, would otherwise have little or no health care.⁵⁸ It has been estimated that if full services were in place, an additional twenty-four hundred centers would be needed, costing about \$3.5 billion.⁵⁹ Our proposal is to immediately create a system with a more limited target population—mothers and babies and children under age five. Hence, we estimate the costs would be less to immediately get the proposed clinics up and running.

Finding enough health professionals to staff the proposed centers will not be easy. But here again, the federal government can be of help. Since 1970, the National Health

Service Corps has given scholarships and loans to students, physicians, nurses, and other health care providers—about thirteen thousand doctors, nurses, and other professionals—who agree to work in underserved communities after training.⁶⁰ Recently, due to budget cuts, the number of National Health Service Corps workers has declined dramatically. At a time when the need is so great, it seems unthinkable that a proven program would have its funding slashed. We recommend that nurses and physicians receive full scholarships for training in return for three years of service. We also urge that special priority be given to the recruitment and training of professional midwives and nurse-practitioners who can provide quality maternal and child care.

The nation's first education goal—the pledge that by the year 2000 all children will come to school ready to learn—offers an opportunity for the health and education communities to work together. Leaders in both sectors now understand, more fully than ever before, that a child's physical well-being and school performance are inseparably tied together. In our search for ways to improve education, we must concern ourselves first with health because of its critical impact on schooling. The Business Roundtable, comprised of the nation's leading CEOs, makes this compelling claim: "Raising our expectations for educational performance will not produce the needed improvement unless we reduce the barriers to learning that are represented by poor student health."⁶¹

Given the problem of budget constraints, we propose that the health program outlined above be phased in, beginning in 1992, and expanding each year so that by 1998 all of its components—WIC, Maternal and Child Health, as well as the Community and Migrant Health Centers—are fully funded. To accomplish this, a plan and a timetable for implementation are needed, and our will must be sustained. "We absolutely cannot afford to wait until the school bell rings to attend to our children's health," echoes the National Health Education Consortium. "We need to start thinking of immunizations, well-child care and health screenings, proper food, and prevention of health problems as being just as important to education as books and pencils and chalkboards and teachers. We need to act swiftly—and we need to act boldly. There is no time to waste."⁶²

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The Second Step:

EMPOWERED PARENTS

Home is the first classroom. Parents are the first and most essential teachers, and all children, as a readiness requirement, must live in a secure and loving environment where language promotes learning. To achieve these goals we urge mothers and fathers to read to their children, tell them stories, celebrate the arts, take them on excursions. We propose, as well, that every state launch a parent education program, with a common guidebook, and that a national preschool PTA be organized to give parents of preschool children guidance and support and build a bridge between the home and school.

Next to physical well-being, a child's most pressing, most persistent requirement is human bonding. Human beings have an absolute need for social intercourse from the first moments of life, according to biologist Mary E. Clark.¹ How else can we explain the reaching out to others, the innate urge for language, the formation of friendships, and the intensity of family ties? When a child is socially and emotionally supported within the family, prospects for learning are enhanced. And so it is unreasonable to expect a child to succeed fully in school if, during the first years of life, he or she has been denied a warm, supportive environment at home.

Even physical contact—holding and hugging and massaging—enhances the well being of little children. In a remarkable experiment at the University of Miami Medical Center, premature infants, who usually have little physical contact, were massaged gently for fifteen minutes several times a day. These infants gained 45 percent more weight than did babies who were left alone. Further, the nervous systems of the massaged infants matured more rapidly. They were discharged from the hospital earlier, and as they got older, they did better on tests of motor and mental ability.²

The point is beyond dispute. After health comes love. The two are bundled up together. Research reveals that close bonds advance learning, too. We now know that young children whose parents and other caregivers provide stable, responsive care, who

interact and play with them in developmentally appropriate ways are likely to develop the feelings of trust, empathy, curiosity, and confidence that are essential to later learning and social development.³ If human affection is withheld, prospects for healthy growth are diminished.

A warm, supportive home environment, with lots of lively social interaction, is especially consequential in promoting the *linguistic* development of the child. And it is language, perhaps more than any other skill, that determines success. Words are the connecting tissue that bind us to each other. Language gives children the tools they need to express feelings and ideas and to powerfully influence the attitudes of others. It is in the early years that youngsters become miraculously empowered in the use of words. And every child, to fully succeed in school, needs an environment that is language rich, in which parents speak frequently to their children, answer their questions, introduce them to good books, and read to them every day.

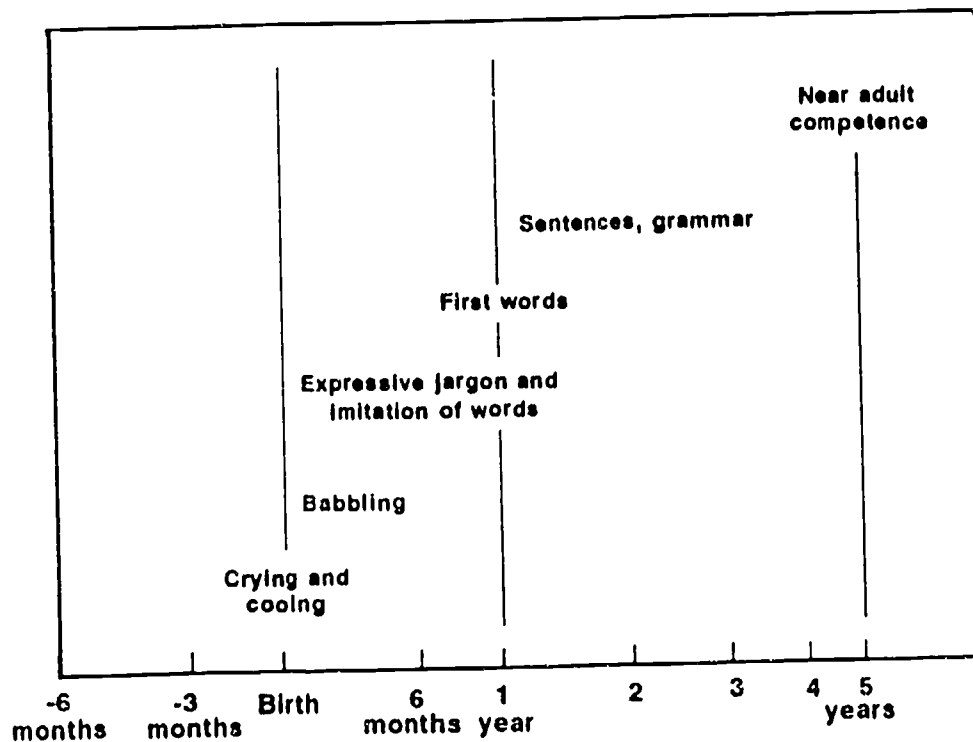
The miracle of language begins in utero, and it's no accident that the three middle ear bones, the hammer, anvil, and stirrup, are the only bones that are fully formed at birth. It is in the womb that the baby first monitors the mother's voice and listens to the rhythm of her heart. Diane Ackerman, in her poetic story of the human senses, reminds us that, "The womb is a snug, familiar landscape, an envelope of rhythmic warmth, and the mother's heartbeat a steady clarion of safety. Do we ever forget that sound? When babies begin talking, their first words are usually the same sounds repeated: Mama, papa, boo-boo."⁴ Hannah Nuba, a librarian in the New York Public Library, notes that one wonderful way parents can promote both physical and verbal bonding is through stimulating reading—from the very first. "I am often asked by expectant or new parents about the best time for introducing books to young children," she says. "My answer is always: Right now. Gentle, relaxed conversation (albeit one-sided at first) provides a rich learning environment for the infant from the beginning, while tending to have a soothing effect on the acting parent as well."⁵

After birth, language, quite literally, explodes (figure 1). First are cries and coos, followed by babbling isolated phonemes, imitative words, simple "sentences" that so delight the grown-ups. Then come simple words, followed by real sentences, and by age five, at the time children go off to school, they have, on average, a vocabulary of more than three thousand words. It is just amazing how tiny children, with no formal instruction, become linguistically empowered. Childhood is for language, is the way essayist Lewis Thomas puts it.⁶

Figure 1

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The Child's Ability to Think and Talk



Source: *Human Development, From Conception Through Adolescence.*

Vast numbers of our children grow up in homes that are language poor, in environments where parents speak carelessly and fail to listen. They hear only curt commands, not mind-enriching conversations, and frequently receive careless responses to their questions. One survey found that parents talk to their children just a few minutes every day, usually giving orders. Even in well-run day-care centers children frequently spend most of their waking hours interacting with other toddlers, not adults.

Simply stated, if a child's world is filled with words, prospects for school success are wonderfully enhanced. Yet, when we asked kindergarten teachers what problem *most* restricted school readiness, overwhelmingly they cited deficiency in language (table 5).

One teacher wrote: "It's really frustrating to see children who simply can't communicate. They can't form simple sentences or carry on any kind of conversation at all. It's like they have been starved for words." Another said, "What young children need most is a caring home, just spending time together. They also need a language-rich environment where there is lots of talk and reading. Parents need to know that a two-year-old can learn rapidly, and all parents should talk to their children—have conversations in the home."

Table 5
Kindergarten Teachers Who Reported
"Serious Problems" in Specific Dimensions of Readiness

	<u>Percentage of Teachers</u>
Language richness	51%
Emotional maturity	43
General knowledge	38
Social confidence	31
Moral awareness	21
Physical well-being	6

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers. 1991.

Children who begin school "ready to learn" are linguistically *empowered*; they are loved, and they spend time with adults who talk and read to them during the first months and years of life. As a result, speech- and language-impooverished children have been found to be up to six times more likely to experience reading problems than children without language difficulties, according to researcher Genevieve Clapp.⁷ The problem is that, according to a U.S. Department of Education survey of fifty thousand households, nearly 30 percent of today's parents do *not* regularly read aloud to their children and nearly 40 percent don't tell their children stories (table 6).

Table 6
Percent of Parents Who Report They Regularly
Engage in Literacy Activities With Their 3- to 5- Year Old Children

	<u>Read</u>	<u>Tell A Story</u>	<u>Teach Letters, Words, or Numbers</u>
All parents	72%	39%	60%
Less than high school education	53	32	62
High school graduate or some college education	68	38	61
College graduate	85	42	59

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics.⁸

To achieve school readiness, language richness must become a priority in the home of every child. All parents and day-care providers must speak frequently to children, listen for responses, answer questions, and read aloud to them at least one-half hour every day, preferably even longer. And in talking with parents, we were struck that while many *want* to be helpful to their children, they are not sure just what to read.

One teacher wrote, "It shocks me each year that I meet new parents who haven't been reading to their children simply because they don't know they should." Another wrote: "In my district, most of my students' parents were only in their teens. These parents simply do not know how to prepare their child for school because they themselves are still children." One kindergarten teacher, wrote: "I talk with parents about reading to their children and many say they don't have books at home or they aren't sure what stories are appropriate for little children."

To help guide parents in choosing books for their young child, the Children's Division of the American Library Association recently prepared an attractive brochure listing children's books called, "Becoming a Lifetime Reader." For preschoolers it

recommended such selections as Eric Carles' *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*,⁹ Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight Moon*,¹⁰ and Beatrix Potter's classic, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.¹¹ This creative effort, we believe, could be expanded into a more detailed list of "Ready-to-Learn Books and Stories" appropriate for parents, to read to their preschool children at different ages.

Specifically, we suggest that the Children's Division of the American Library Association could help prepare a new "Ready-to-Learn Reading Series" of new and classic literature for preschoolers. This series could be placed in libraries across the land and, in turn largely available to parents. It could be distributed to parents by pediatricians or employers and made available on loan at libraries and schools, or at synagogues and churches. A private or corporate foundation may wish to support the preparation and distribution of a new "Ready-to-Learn Library" series. In short, what we would like to see are attractive "ready-to-learn" children's books available to all children, building perhaps, on the experience of the "Reading is Fundamental" program that for years has distributed illustrated books to children nationwide.

But literacy, in the richest, fullest sense, means communicating not just verbally but nonverbally as well. And little children, even before becoming fully fluent in the symbol system we call words, respond powerfully to music, dance, and the visual arts. A painting, a playful poem, a song's beat, and a dance step are just a few of the countless symbols that bring meaning to a child's world. Without these rich forms of expression the language of children cannot fully convey their thoughts and feelings.

Harvard psychologist, Howard Gardner, in his provocative book *Frames of Mind*, reminds us that people have not only verbal intelligence, they also have spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, and personal intelligence.¹² Even infants and toddlers, before they have acquired fully-formed speech, delight in sound and rhythm and color. They are drawn to attractively shaped objects, soothed by music, and responsive to rhythms and dance. Years before they write letters and even before they say many words, children are drawing circles, moving, or singing.

Before school all children should have explored freely the beauty of the world around them, touching flowers, looking at the symmetry of bridges, the shapes of buildings, and watching the floating clouds. They should explore their neighborhoods, visit museums, galleries, aquariums, and zoos. The entire community should be a classroom for the child, one in which parents and children learn together. That's the

ideal. Yet, according to a recent national survey, only 39 percent of all parents regularly engage in music activities and about one-third say they engage in arts and crafts activities with their children (table 7).

Table 7
Parents¹³ Who Report That They Regularly¹⁴
Engage In Arts Activities With Their 3- to 5-Year-Old Children¹⁵

	<u>All Parents</u>	<u>Less Than High School Education</u>	<u>High School Graduate or Some College Education</u>	<u>College Graduate</u>
Teach songs or music	39%	38%	39%	41%
Engage in arts and crafts	34	34	31	42

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics.¹⁶

Good parenting takes time. Children, especially when they are very young, need continuity in care. But in our complicated, fast-paced world, many mothers and fathers find it difficult to spend time with their children, talk with them at leisure and help patiently to expand their knowledge of the world. Too many are more distracted than engaged. A recent survey revealed that more than half of the nation's adults feel that the quality of family life in this country has deteriorated. Three out of four believe that the problems affecting children are worse today than when they were growing up, and 60 percent say that it is difficult to find enough time for their children (table 8).¹⁷

Table 8
Parents' Attitudes Toward Children and Family Life

	<u>Percentage Agreeing</u>
Family life is worse than it was when I was growing up	52%
Problems affecting children are worse than when I was growing up	76
Parents generally are doing a good job in giving their children values	47
It is a problem finding enough time to spend with children	60

SOURCE: Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.¹⁸

Mealtime traditionally has been an occasion when family members could come together, not just for food, but also to exchange ideas and talk with one another. Around the table, amidst the chatter and confusion, children hear new words, receive new messages and, according to sociologist Robert Bellah, at least occasionally, learn "the terms of civil discourse."¹⁹ But even mealtime may be an endangered tradition. Today, lots of children, when they get hungry, just help themselves to snacks and, thanks to the microwave oven, older people eat and run. A recent survey revealed that about 30 percent of today's families do not, with regularity, have dinner together.²⁰

Several years ago, Carnegie Foundation researchers surveyed five thousand fifth- and eighth-graders to get a sense of family life. Sixty percent of the respondents said they wish they could spend more time with their mothers and fathers; nearly one-third of the children responding said their families never sit down to eat a meal together. One suburban youngster told us, "We usually don't eat dinner at the regular time because

we never see each other. We're always coming and going, and there's no time to sit down together to eat."

Parents overwhelmingly want to do right by their children. But family schedules are so complicated these days that parents—especially single parents—have trouble balancing their responsibilities. One kindergarten teacher, reflecting on her parent conferences, said: "Parents really do want to spend more time with their children, but they simply are trying to do too much, without help. It's very hard for them to fit the pieces together." Pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton reinforced the point: "There is every indication that families in the U.S. are trying to handle more than they can alone. The tensions created by the necessity of both parents working pervades their lives. The parents feel there is not enough time left for caring for their children."²¹

Further, there's a prevailing myth in this country that parenting is a "natural" skill, something that's either innate or easily learned from relatives and friends. Sometimes that's the way it works, but more often parents are insecure and in need of information and guidance. When asked what would do the most to improve the school readiness of children, kindergarten teachers most frequently responded "parent education." One teacher argued: "Parents need to be educated and helped too. They need to feel good about themselves—then they'll be better parents in the long run." Another kindergarten teacher put the issue even more directly: "I think America's children would be ready for school if this country would have *mandatory* parent education classes for all parents of newborns."

Mandating may be going too far. Some parents *do* read books, and have the time and resources needed to enrich the lives of their children. Their knowledge and instincts lead them, as they have led other parents in countless previous generations, to respond to their children in stimulating and supportive ways.²² Others, however, have little time to be with their children, to talk with them, or go on excursions. They raise their children as they have been raised, which often is not good enough. And so there is a growing feeling in this country that to improve the education of children, parents need educating, too (table 9).

Table 9
Kindergarten Teachers Who Rank Each Goal As Most Important

Parent education	64%
Preschools	16
Family-oriented workplaces	5
Less TV viewing	5
Safe and friendly neighborhoods	2
Health and nutrition services	1
Other	8

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

We propose, therefore, a national parent education program, with every state guaranteeing access to all mothers and fathers of preschool-age children. The goal would be to *empower* parents—to help them learn more about child rearing and, at the same time, build a bridge between the home and school. While every public school should sponsor a parent education program, classes could—and should—be held at places convenient to parents—in churches, Head Start centers, community buildings, housing projects, and work sites, for example. The programs should be available on a fee-for-service basis using a sliding scale based on income.

Minnesota's *Early Childhood Family Education Program*, one of the oldest and most comprehensive in the nation, operates in all of the state's three hundred eighty of the state's school districts, serving families with children under the age of five. Currently, 180,000 children under the age of five and their parents are enrolled. Participating parents attend a two-hour session every week—usually at a school, occasionally at a work site. During the first hour, parents and their children meet together with a teacher-observer, who gives child development guidance. In the second hour, while the children are cared for by others, the parents meet together to discuss successes and frustrations in raising toddlers. One mother said, "It is almost like having another

family, because even when I am having problems, or when I need a little time to talk, they are always there."²³

Missouri's *Parents as Teachers* program offers services to all families with children under the age of three in the state's 542 school districts. Approximately 60,000 participants are currently enrolled.²⁴ Parents are recruited at childbirth classes, doctors' offices, and health clinics. A video called "Born to Learn" is shown to mothers during hospital visits. The program offers ongoing instruction to parents, monitors the health of children, and also provides home visits by parent educators and group meetings for parents. The program, funded by the state and private foundations, costs an average of about \$350 per year per family in each school district. The Missouri program, according to a recent study, has made a dramatic impact on parents' knowledge—as well as on the school performance of children.²⁵ The success of this effort has led to the establishment of a National Center for Parents as Teachers, based in St. Louis and the program is spreading to other states.

In Arkansas, a parent education program called *HIPPY*—Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters—reaches 2,400 four- and five-year-olds and their parents. The goal is to empower mothers and fathers to become effective teachers. Participating parents use a series of books and activities to guide their youngsters for fifteen minutes a day, five days each week, thirty weeks each year, for two years. A paraprofessional, often a mother who has already completed the course, makes home visits and monitors the progress of mothers and children. The state provides 60 percent of the funding, with local communities contributing the rest.²⁶

One parent involved in the *HIPPY* program said, "I never thought I could teach my child anything. I never knew I had anything to teach her. *HIPPY* showed me I do. It made me my child's first teacher." Another parent noted the self-confidence the program gave her. "I always knew I could feed and clothe my son, but I never tried to teach him anything because anything I taught him would be wrong." And a third noted, "It has taught my son his shapes and colors, how to pay attention to someone when they are reading to him, and how to follow directions. It has taught us to have a better relationship. It allowed us to spend time together that normally we would not have." Another mother in Little Rock described the impact of the program: "The *HIPPY* program has given my son Michael the educational advantages he needed to prepare him to enter into the school system. Some parents have no idea how to teach their

children. And in this case that parent was me. But HIPPY has made another life worth living."²⁷

Half of the HIPPY groups are in Arkansas. But HIPPY has now spread to sixteen other states, from Michigan to Texas, and is serving more than 8,000 families nationwide. HIPPY USA, a project of the National Council of Jewish Women in New York City, provides training and technical assistance to ongoing and new HIPPY programs. To protect the quality of the local program and HIPPY's reputation, local groups are required to work with HIPPY USA, to develop and use information and about sources of funding.²⁸

The state of Oregon launched *Together for Children* in the fall of 1988 with three pilot programs that target parents with at-risk children from birth to eight—including migrant families, teen parents, and low-income parents. The program—which serves nearly 6,000 mothers and fathers and gives intensive support to approximately 376 families—provides home visits, classes, and parent support groups (table 10).

Table 10
Models Of State Parent Education Programs²⁰

<u>State</u>	<u>Eligibility</u>	<u>Number Served</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Arkansas HIPPI	Educationally at-risk 4-5 year olds	11,000 in Arkansas, 8,000 more nationwide	\$9 million
Maryland Family Support Centers	Teenage parents with children 0-3 years old	2,500 parents and children	\$7.5 million
Minnesota Early Childhood Family Education	All parents with children 0-5 years old	185,000 parents and children	\$25.2 million
Missouri Parents as Teachers (PAT)	All parents with children 0-3 years old	60,000 families	\$11.4 million
Oregon Together for Children	At-risk families with children 0-8 years old	6,000 families, with 376 families receiving intensive services	\$266,000+

A national parental program would make it possible for states to collaborate in preparing a common guidebook for parents. Rather than ask the fifty states to go down separate paths, why not have a uniform approach to parenting programs, one that would reflect the best of current knowledge? A uniform parent guidebook would assure continuity from school to school and state to state, ensuring a similar emphasis regardless of the school in which the child is enrolled. Since 20 percent of American

families move each year, a more uniform approach to parent education would make it possible for those who relocate to find a similar program wherever they live. We propose therefore that a national "Parent Guide" be prepared by a consortium of education groups led by National Association for the Education of Young Children and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

The proposed parenting guide should be written in language that is clear, concise, jargon-free, and understandable to the full range of parents—including those who have limited reading skills. We also urge that the state parenting program include an adult literacy component to help parents who have not learned to read. The National Center for Family Literacy, a program in which parents and children go to school together, was established in 1987 to promote family literacy. In one project in Kentucky, for example, where the Center started, mothers and children come to school together three days a week. They ride the same buses and eat meals together in the cafeteria, and while the preschoolers are learning how to express themselves orally in one classroom, parents are learning to read in another. Later, parents volunteer in the school while their children play, and then they travel home together. Sharon Darling, president of the Center said, "We are trying to get parents to raise their literacy skills so that they can, in fact, support education in the home."³⁰

Preliminary studies show that high-risk students participating in the program succeed academically in the early grades and demonstrate the self-confidence and motivation to learn that are essential for continued school success.³¹ Parents are successful, too. One mother wrote, "For years I wanted to go back to school but I always had plenty of excuses and reasons not to. I was afraid if I pursued my dream that my children might somehow be left behind, and then you placed a bridge that supported all of us, allowing us to dream together, learn together, and achieve together."³²

Finally, preschool parents should have close and continuing contact with the school long before their children go off to kindergarten. Too many mothers and fathers have no communication with the school until it's time formally to register their child. All too often parents with preschoolers feel isolated, and we are convinced that parents of preschool children should have opportunities to talk not only with parents of other preschoolers, but with teachers, too. Without these essential interactions, not only the parents and their child—but also the schools—are placed at a disadvantage. When we asked a kindergarten teacher whether children are ready for school, she replied: "I'm personally more concerned about whether the schools are ready for the children."

By getting to know young children before they enroll, schools can be better prepared to meet their individual needs. Specifically, we recommend that all communities organize a Preschool PTA—supported by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. The organization has earned credibility and displayed a long-standing commitment to building a bridge between the home and school. The National PTA traces its roots back to 1897, when a new organization called the National Conference of Mothers was established to educate mothers of young children about child development. Now, by expanding its efforts to include preschool parents in every community, the National PTA would be returning to its roots.

Already the PTA has 192 preschool affiliates and thus it seems the ideal group to forge a new preschool parent organization. Lakewood, Ohio, has a Preschool PTA, an informal parent network that includes five hundred families. The program, run by volunteers, clearly fills a need: parents continue to sign up, and the group keeps growing. The Lakewood program is organized by blocks within school districts so that parents can get to know their neighbors. Lakewood has eight such neighborhood subsections, and each conducts social, parental support, and education activities. "The networking is important," said president Becky Sammon. "It is important to know that you are not alone whether you are a working mom or a single mom and that when you have a problem you have someone to call and talk to. You borrow ideas from other parents. Some may seem silly, like 'how should your child respond to a bully at preschool?' But these are topics that are important to preschool parents. And then you can exchange ideas." And so these programs offer mothers and fathers both support and information that they can use to continuously strengthen their parenting skills.

If within a decade all children are to come to school ready to learn, empowered parents must be the cornerstone of this effort. Nurturing a child at home—physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually—is vital to the child's well-being and success in school. The family remains what Will and Ariel Durant called the nucleus of civilization. It remains the key to education, too. If every child is to be well prepared for school, he or she surely needs the kind of care and guidance that only good parenting can provide.

NOTES

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The Third Step

QUALITY PRESCHOOL

This fall, more than four million youngsters started school, not as kindergartners or first graders, but as three- and four-year-olds off to their first day of "preschool." They are among the ten million children under the age of six who have fathers and mothers working outside the home and who need some form of child care. And the quality of this experience unquestionably will affect how they grow and surely will determine, in very fundamental ways, their readiness for school. The Business Roundtable states the case precisely: "While it is not a silver bullet, the evidence is very strong that a quality, developmentally-appropriate preschool program for disadvantaged children can significantly reduce poor school performance."¹

Quality preschool can be helpful not only to disadvantaged children but to all students, and in this chapter we propose not only that Head Start become an entitlement program, but that every school district offer a preschool program on a fee-for-services basis. We also recommend that day-care programs be expanded in each state and that national licensing standards for such programs be developed. As a final priority, we urge community colleges to take the lead in improving the status of preschool professionals by introducing a new associate degree in child care. Every community college also should establish a collaborative relationship with child-care programs in its service area.

Placing a young child in the care of others is, for many parents, a difficult decision born of necessity. A mother of a three-year-old told us: "I hate dropping my son off at 7:30 every morning. We hardly have time to grab a bite of breakfast, and when we meet again at night there's only time for fast-food and then it's off to bed. But I'm a single parent and, frankly, have no choice."² Another working mother said: "It's just a fact of life that my husband and I are going to work. We need the two incomes to have anything approaching a comfortable life. That means our little girl has to go to day care."³ And yet another parent, a single mother noted: "The debate over the pros and

cons of day care has become tiresome. I *need* the help. That's the reality of the situation."⁴

Child care in America has grown dramatically in recent years. Since the 1970s, the number of children placed in care outside the home has increased four-fold and the location and types of care provided are shifting, too. Today, 28 percent of all employed mothers place their children in centers, up 13 percent since 1977. Nineteen percent now depend on relatives to care for their children, compared with 31 percent in the 1970s. The percentage of those who use a caregiver in their own home has dropped from 7 to 3 percent, while the number of families providing care themselves has remained essentially the same, about 30 percent (table 11).

TABLE 11

Preschoolers in Various Child-Care Settings

In another home	36%
In their own home	30
In day care or nursery	24
At parent's workplace	9

SOURCE: The Urban Institute.

A child-care experience, at its best—whether in "day care" or "preschool"—can be beneficial to growing children, especially the disadvantaged. It can help youngsters make new friends, develop language skills, learn to share, play, create imaginary worlds, gain social confidence, and develop a sense of right and wrong. Interaction between children and adults increases prospects for school success. Jean Piaget believed that in the moral realm, children need both adult *and* peer relationships—the former to learn respect for the social order and conventions, the latter to develop feelings of "moral reciprocity," kindness, cooperation, and justice.⁵

Researchers confirm the value of child care, especially if it is loving and child-centered, with the right blend of playfulness and guidance. Tiffany Field of the University of Miami Medical School found that children who spend time in high-quality child care are better adjusted emotionally and socially in elementary school than are those without such experience. Participants had more friends, and the more active they were in the program, the more highly they were rated on scales of emotional well-being, popularity, attractiveness, and assertiveness. In another study conducted in Syracuse, New York, children from low-income families who participated in a comprehensive child-care and family-support program were compared with children who were not. Program participants, especially the girls, did better in school. Boys not in the program committed roughly four times more school offenses than did those who were.

Kindergarten teachers responding to our survey firmly support high-quality educative child care, too. When asked what would "most improve" the readiness of children, the second most frequently mentioned suggestion from teachers was "preschool education." Even more impressive was the frequency with which teachers commented on the impact that preschool has on school readiness. One teacher wrote, "The most important step this country can take is to make sure each child is offered the opportunity for preschool." Another added, "From my own experience, it's clear that children who have had preschool come to kindergarten with better language skills, better motor capabilities, a broad base of knowledge."

That's the ideal. But in reality, millions of parents in this country are struggling with a "nonsystem" of child care—one entered into with little knowledge, little confidence, little power to change. Poor parents, especially, are at a disadvantage, as their limited income greatly restricts their child-care options. In families with incomes of \$10,000 or less, and those with income between \$20,000 and \$30,000, only about 40 percent of the children are in preschool. For affluent families, the figure is 75 percent (table 12). Further, the cost of preschool consumes on average 23 percent of a poor family's monthly income, compared with merely 10 percent of the income of affluent families.

For many parents, though, the biggest problem is finding a place that offers quality care and a convenient schedule. While a majority of parents say they are satisfied with the child-care arrangements they now have, many are looking for a change.⁶ Moreover, a 1987 survey by The Carnegie Foundation revealed that nearly one in four families who use child care are, in fact, forced to rely on two different providers in a single day. A convenient location is another critical factor. One mother told us that the only

preschool program she could find was across the city, in exactly the opposite direction from her work. She added, "Preschool ended at 2 o'clock and I don't get off until 3.30 p.m."

TABLE 12
Enrollment of Three- to Five-Year-Olds^a
in Preschool,^a by Family Income, 1991

More than \$75,000	75%
\$50,001 to \$75,000	60
\$40,001 to \$50,000	55
\$30,001 to \$40,000	48
\$20,001 to \$30,000	41
\$10,001 to \$20,000	40
\$10,000 or less	42

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, 1991.⁹

In contrast to the difficulties and frustrations experienced by American parents, almost all Europeans live in countries that acknowledge the necessity and value of preschool programs. Sheila Kamerman of Columbia University notes that many Western European countries publicly fund preschools. As a result, 97 percent of the three- to five-year-olds in France are in such programs. In Belgium, the figure is 95 percent; in Italy, 90 percent; and in Germany, 80 percent.¹⁰

In the city of Copenhagen, for example, children in day care are out for neighborhood excursions every day. Copenhagen is a busy city with much to see and do, and even very young children are provided with opportunities to learn about and be engaged in various aspects of city life. According to Inga Kraus, who grew up in Denmark and was trained as an early childhood professional there, "Children are very much a part of the street scene. Groups of ten or twenty are seen every day on public transportation

facilities—buses, trains. No one grumbles when a group climbs aboard, despite the fact that they leave very little room. It is just an everyday thing." Kraus notes that groups of young children walking through the city are a common sight. "Young ones hold onto a rope and the very youngest are in wagons, and this caravan travels everywhere—negotiating traffic and public facilities."¹¹

Today the United States stands alone among industrialized nations in its failure to have a national child-care policy. Yet, the history of formal child care in this country can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, when charity workers in the growing cities were seeking ways to protect and educate the youngest children of the working poor.¹² By mid-century, the idea of the "day nursery," inspired by the French *crèche*, became the choice. The Helen Day Nursery in Chicago, for example, saw itself as "a place where children who need shelter and protection by day or night may be cared for during the mother's working hours; a place which shall provide temporary refuge in emergency; and an industrial, educational, and social center for mothers from which shall emanate standards of respectable living."¹³ Experimental kindergartens and, later, nursery schools, primarily for the children of nonworking middle-class parents, rounded out the early-childhood education scene.

It was not until the Great Depression and the Second World War, however, that group care for young children was attempted on a larger scale. Under the auspices of the Federal Recovery Act and Works Project Administration, nearly 2,000 "free nursery schools" for children between the ages of two and four were organized through public school districts. Designed primarily to create jobs for the unemployed, these nurseries were rapidly superseded by a new system of full-fledged day-care centers, built quickly so that mothers could be mobilized as workers during World War II. These centers did not survive the emergency that had brought them into being.

By the end of the 1960s, when almost one-quarter of the nation's mothers with children under six had entered the labor force, there was a virtual explosion in the field of early-childhood education. Public school kindergartens expanded, accommodating two-thirds of the nation's five-year-olds. Tuition-supported nursery schools proliferated, with the enrollment of three- and four-year-olds rising from 800,000 in 1965 to 1,150,000 in 1970. Head Start, a centerpiece of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty, offered nursery-school education to poor children, and gave them health and nutritional support, as well.

Some twenty years ago, a White House conference on children declared child care "the most pressing need of American families." But during the last two decades, little progress has been made in fulfilling this need. Today, many parents in this country scramble to find high-quality programs at affordable prices, and in our jerry-built child-care nonsystem, it is children who suffer most. We conclude, then, that if we really are serious about the school readiness of all children, making quality care immediately available is a priority America can delay no longer. But who should take the lead? What is the first step in shaping a comprehensive system?

The place to begin is Head Start. For more than twenty-five years, this successful program has provided preschool education to disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds. Today, there are almost two thousand Head Start programs from coast to coast, and in 1990 alone, 548,000 children received its services. The goal of the program is to build children's self-esteem, give them a positive self-concept, provide appropriate nutrition, and help them develop the socialization skills and life experiences that they will need to succeed in school. It also actively involves parents in their children's education and supports the family by linking the program to social services. "The whole point of Head Start," says Urie Bronfenbrenner, "is to build a sense of community."¹⁴

While each Head Start Center designs its program to meet the needs of local children, the general format is consistent nationwide. Most programs are half day. But at one Ulster County Head Start Center in New York, the program generally begins at 9 a.m. with children greeting each other and dispersing for a half-hour of free play in and around various learning centers. Breakfast is a time for language as well as for food, with the teacher and assistants discussing whatever the children choose to tell or talk about. After the children brush their teeth, they go to "work" centers, usually of their choice, and spend an hour on a special theme guided by a teacher. Before noon, children go outdoors to play, weather permitting, to walk through the neighborhood, climb an obstacle course that matches the theme of the day or week, role-play, mime, or free play. Most centers take children on a trip once a month and to the local library's story hour once a week.¹⁵

At noon, everyone washes up and a family-style lunch is served, where children pass food and pour their own beverages from child-sized pitchers. Earlier in the program, they were taught about using utensils and following mealtime etiquette. Like breakfast,

lunch is a time for language and social skills. The staff eats with the children to encourage conversation and reinforce appropriate behaviors. After toothbrushing again, quiet activities are pursued. Some children rest, while others listen to stories or music, or work on puzzles. In the afternoon program, which extends to 2 p.m. at the Ulster Center, activities are pursued—including art, music, or continuing projects. Many of the youngsters have foster grandparents who visit the program.

Head Start programs are located in diverse settings. In Santa Clara County, California, for example, the Sunnyvale Head Start Program shares space with Young World, a private day-care provider, and with a school district day-care program. Another Head Start program in the county is housed in a homeless shelter and serves the needs of homeless children and their families. A Head Start Family Service Center in San Jose is located in a community with a high number of refugees from Cambodia, and from Central and South America. While the children are in Head Start, older family members learn to read and develop the skills necessary to find employment.¹⁶

The Head Start programs on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana are unique in many ways—from the content of the curriculum and the high level of parental participation to the celebration of tribal cultures. One hundred and twenty children are enrolled in six programs on the reservation for four hours each day. Many fathers participate, as do grandparents, known as the "elders." Jeanne Christopher, the director, reports that the elders tend to sit quietly in one place in the classroom while the children move in and out of those areas, engaging the elders in activities and sharing their work with them.

Most Head Start centers involve parents. At the Flathead Head Start Center, for example, parents help plan cultural activities that invariably attract uncles and other members of the extended family as well. Each center has its own tipi, and each May there is a reservation-wide pow-wow, a time when people of all ages gather for an "intergenerational sharing time," as Christopher calls it. "Elders come to the centers to drum for the children. Children go to the homes of elders to listen to stories." Children also learn basic hygiene, such as brushing their teeth after meals, and they participate in a family-style breakfast, a time that emphasizes language and conversation. During the day the children sing and listen to stories and go to different areas for sand and water play, drama, science, or other learning themes. The center's approach to teaching is sensitive to the differences among children: "When a child has a problem,

we look at ourselves first and ask, 'What am I doing? What is my part in this?,' said Christopher. "Then we look at the child."

From all perspectives, Head Start works. Children who have participated in the program do, on average, get a better start in school, and for every dollar Head Start spends, five dollars are saved down the road. One kindergarten teacher wrote: "Children entering my class who have had preschool, especially Head Start, are better adjusted." Another noted, "Preschool programs like Head Start fill a void and provide rich experiences—nutrition, socialization, and speech development. Such programs surely should be expanded so all children who need them could be helped."

The problem is that today, a quarter-century after Head Start was authorized by Congress, two-thirds of those eligible still are not being served. Over the years literally millions and millions of young children have been ignored. This is inexcusable. How can America continue to justify denying children access to a program that will help them succeed in school and in life, and that will benefit the nation in the long run? It is as unethical as withholding a vaccine that would protect children from a dreaded disease. We propose, therefore, that Head Start be officially designated an "entitlement program"—giving *all* eligible children the right to such a service—with full funding by 1995. According to the best estimates, this would increase Head Start's appropriation from \$2 billion to \$8.3 billion.¹⁷ This is one "peace dividend" that would pay off handsomely in the long run.

Full funding is an important step, but it is only the first. We also believe that Head Start programs should be tied more closely to the elementary schools in their communities to ensure that there is continuity in students' learning and that the teachers at each level have congruent goals. When Head Start first began, its leaders insisted on independence. They worried that schools might dictate curriculum, force little children into rigid classroom procedures, and make the program too academic.

But today, connecting the efforts of Head Start programs with those in schools would ensure that learning is, as it should be, a seamless web. To ensure that the full range of children's needs is being met—not just the academic—teachers at both levels should design a common curriculum that focuses on such qualities as physical well-being, emotional maturity, language richness, general knowledge, as well as social confidence and moral awareness. We also urge that Head Start and elementary school teachers

meet occasionally to compare notes, focusing especially on what works. The advantages of such exchanges surely would flow in both directions—and to the children, as well.

Locating Head Start within a school building is obviously one method of achieving closer ties. Already, about 20 percent of all the programs are located in school facilities. Children in the Sunnyvale, California, program who go on to attend public school have an easy transition, as they are already in the same building and are familiar with the adults and with some of the activities there. In Alexandria, Virginia, where the George Washington Head Start Program is located in a junior high school, teachers work together and junior-high students read to preschoolers from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the afternoon. The Head Start program in Dunkirk, New York, is also housed in a public elementary school, and the ninety children in the program enjoy a smooth transition from preschool to kindergarten. Head Start and kindergarten teachers meet at the end of each year to discuss each child. In the model we propose, directors of the Ready-to-Learn Clinics should be consulted too, since good health and good education are inseparably intertwined.

While disadvantaged children especially are helped by preschool, other children can benefit as well. Several years ago, Yale child-care authority Edward Zigler, one of the founders of Head Start, proposed a plan in which *every* public elementary school would provide year-round preschool for all three- to five-year-olds, not just those in Head Start. "The child-care system," Zigler said, "must become part of the very structure of our society. It must be tied to a known major societal institution"—an idea, we believe, whose time has come.

In the past decade, in fact, classes for four-year-olds in the nation's public schools have increased four-fold. Today, 15 percent of all school districts nationwide offer such programs. Further, more than half of all Americans favor publicly-funded preschools for three- and four-year-olds whose parents choose to enroll them.

We therefore recommend that every school district in the country establish a preschool program for all three- and four-year-olds not participating in Head Start. Fees would be on a sliding scale or a fee-for-service basis. In Independence, Missouri, two elementary schools—models of what Zigler calls "The School of the Twenty-First Century"—have all-day child care for children aged three to five. At the Sycamore Hills Elementary School,

preschoolers are in a program located in the school itself and are served breakfast in the gym. Parents of newborns receive advice, and the school also runs an information and referral service that helps parents find day care for toddlers. High school students enroll in child development classes at the center and work as child-care assistants. Parents pay a fee on a sliding scale.

Hartford, Connecticut, schools operate a similar program with state support. One day at a school in a low-income urban area, a mother drops off two children, a six-year-old boy and his three-year-old sister, at 7:30 a.m. The two siblings play for half an hour until 8:00 a.m., when the six-year-old goes to his first-grade class. The three-year-old stays at the center all day, and at 3 p.m. is joined by her brother again. Their mother picks up the children after work at 6 p.m., saying, "It is comforting to know that my children are in a safe place all day and down the street from where I live."¹⁸

The Orangeburg, South Carolina, school district established an all-day program for four-year-olds whom school officials worried would be "at risk" of failure later on. Youngsters receive extra help in basic skills, while their parents attend a training program to help them reinforce the children's learning. Orangeburg's test scores have increased as much as 200 percent in language arts, math and reading, while its drop-out rate decreased 244 percent over a four year period.¹⁹ School officials are convinced that their early intervention program made the difference.²⁰

The problem is that high-quality preschool experiences such as these remain the exception, not the rule—and that parents trying to locate quality child care for infants and toddlers find the task extremely difficult. According to the National Academy of Sciences, the greatest child-care challenge facing the nation is "infant care."²¹ Yet, the first three years of life, perhaps more than any other, are crucial to learning. Children in these early years are so aware, so responsive to the world around them, that it will be quite impossible to fulfill the nation's first education goal without providing these children with a stimulating environment and with tender, loving care. Home care may be preferred, but many parents, especially single mothers, simply must place their children in the care of others while they work.

One mother we talked with said that before returning to work, she wanted to place her new baby in a home-care environment, but no relatives were available to help. She thought about hiring a nanny, but could not afford the cost. Her choice was between a private day-care home or a center. Unfortunately, the family day-care ho

she liked best had a long waiting list. "I had my name on lists for nine months," she recalled, "and it was within ten days of when I had to go back to work, and I had no place to keep the baby. I finally found one place that could take her for several months, but it's all so temporary."

The child-care challenge, then, is not just a matter of providing space, but also of assuring quality. Right now, 40 percent of all children in home care are *not* protected by any state regulations,²² and many day-care services operate "underground," avoiding licensing. What we lack in this country is a consensus not just about child-care, but about standards. Each state has seemingly gone off in its own direction, leaving a patchwork of programs and a system of neglect. In a telephone survey this summer, we were told of wide-ranging regulations among the states. Consider, for example, child-to-staff ratios. For one-year-olds, the maximum permitted in California is 4 to 1; in Delaware it is 7 to 1. For four-year-olds, the maximum ratio in Illinois is 10 to 1; in Delaware, it is 15 to 1. Space requirements vary greatly, too. One state specifies thirty-five square feet per child in any day-care facility, while in another it's only three. One state has clearly defined training requirements for day-care providers; another has not. Darlene Bolig of the Delaware Education Department summed up the situation in one word: "patchwork."²³ And when it comes to preschool programs, states should be able to say something more to parents than "Buyer Beware."

We visited one center with a well-deserved reputation for high quality. The center was open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and four classes were offered—one each for two-year-olds, three-year-olds, four-year-olds, and five-year-olds. The class size ranged from fifteen to twenty-two children, and the ratio of children to adults was five to one for the two-year-olds, and slightly higher for the older children. The rooms were large and cheerful, children had free access to toys and books, and the playground outside was attractive and well equipped. Children at the center came from a reasonably broad range of family backgrounds. The teaching staff was well trained and reasonably well paid; turnover was minimal.

At another center just ten miles down the road, the doors were locked to prevent children from straying, and the atmosphere was chaotic. One staff person "supervised" ten three-year-olds in a room with few toys and a hard-surfaced floor. With a rapid turnover of hassled, demoralized, poorly-paid, and poorly-trained teachers, the children were seldom comforted and rarely taught. Could the parents have known what was

happening at this center? The directors were defensive and parents were not encouraged to visit while the day was in progress.

Historically, early childhood specialists have organized themselves into two warring camps—with the "day-care" people on one side and the "preschoolers" on the other—as if little children can be forced into bureaucratic boxes. Now is the time to focus on the real issue: the school readiness of children. It is time for state and national leaders to come together to establish an agreed-upon framework to guide each state in shaping its own regulations. In forming these new standards, we strongly urge that the long-standing barriers between "care" and "education" be broken down. We need to develop common standards that apply to day-care and preschool programs, viewing the needs of the *whole* child—from physical well-being to moral awareness.

Fortunately, a foundation already exists on which national child-care standards could be built. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has a well-defined procedure for accrediting, on a voluntary basis, early childhood programs with ten or more children. The National Association for Family Day Care has a parallel set of regulations for homes. And at least seven other national groups have set their own standards, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Public Health Association, which have jointly published a new report on standards for a wide range of topics, from security to playground equipment. These impressive national efforts provide a basis for a consensus on standards nationwide. We recommend, therefore, that a National Child-Care Forum be convened by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, to ensure the uniform licensing of day-care centers in every state by the year 2000.

Years ago, Bettye Caldwell at the University of Arkansas coined a wonderfully descriptive term—"educare"—that captures precisely what we have in mind. "All providers have to pull down their fences and stand side by side to meet the needs of children," adds Muriel Lundgren, director of the Laboratory School and Children's Resource Center at Miami-Dade Community College. "We've always segregated services, only focusing on one part of the child, when in reality, children are integrated beings. We need to tap all the resources and bring them together to meet children's needs."²⁴

Meanwhile, federal legislation may offer some relief. Through the new Child Care and Development Block Grant, approved last year by Congress, parents with young children can receive certificates and vouchers to help pay for the child-care service of their choice, either in the home or away. Part of the money—nearly 20 percent—has been set aside to support new initiatives and expand day-care services.

States have used the block grant funds in a variety of ways. Minnesota has earmarked funding for training, accrediting, and licensing child-care providers, and for several new programs—including special-needs and school-age programs, child-care resource and referral services, and subsidies for parental employment and training services. Arizona plans to use the new federal funds to support toddler care, and Florida will train child-care providers, especially for children with special needs, while New Mexico is focusing on family support services. Ohio, in one of the most comprehensive responses, is setting up a full-time infant care program in high schools. Tennessee is expanding its family "home networks" program by recruiting senior citizens to care for infants and toddlers in their homes. New Jersey has launched "GoodStarts," a comprehensive early-childhood initiative targeted to serve young children who are currently eligible for but not served by Head Start. Montana will use its grant monies to expand current day-care facilities and start new ones, to increase skill-development training for staff, and to provide a merit-pay incentive for child-care providers to help them complete their professional training. Additional funding of existing resource and referral agencies for child care is also planned.²⁵

In addition to these federally-funded initiatives, other exciting efforts are under way. The National Council of Jewish Women, for example, helps communities all across the country expand and improve family care for young children. Its National Family Day Care Project—which now has thirty demonstration sites in twenty states—uses community volunteers to recruit new providers of family day-care homes, train them, and help them get licensed, and to work with municipalities to establish zoning laws that do not restrict home care. To participate in the project, local communities must first assess their day-care needs and then interview employers, volunteer groups, and the local government about existing resources in the area. The national office in New York City then helps communities form a local coalition or partnership and provides technical assistance. "What we are trying to do is build partnerships in communities and assist them in their work," said chairwoman Lynn Lyss. "We help local efforts be successful by sharing project ideas, troubleshooting, and creating publications."²⁶

The Baltimore project created a new partnership between child-care advocates and women's volunteer groups. Efforts led to an increase in the supply of quality family day care for infants, toddlers, and preschool children. The result: additional licensed family day-care homes for 314 children. The project, called "Side by Side," helps providers become licensed and provides equipment and materials necessary to operate a quality program and to meet state regulations. In Worcester, Massachusetts, the project produced a ten-minute videotape to inform new providers about local resources and regulations. Birmingham, Alabama, started a training program for local early-childhood professionals via public television and produces a newsletter for family day-care providers. Miami has a roving "Resourcemobile," a van that primarily serves low-income child-care providers. In the van there is a full-time early-childhood specialist, and it is equipped with educational toys and materials.

These projects are extremely encouraging. And yet we must rededicate ourselves to improving the quality of child-care resources in *every* community. There are many ingredients of quality, but one of the most essential is high-caliber staff. We simply cannot improve the quality of centers without skilled and knowledgeable teachers and providers. And we cannot attract and retrain such providers unless we improve their pay. It is unconscionable that in this country, preschool teachers receive such low wages and are accorded such low status. The average annual salary for early childhood educators is less than \$6.00 an hour, not much more than the minimum wage that teenagers receive for serving french fries at a fast-food restaurant. The average annual salary is now \$11,000—which represents a 25-percent decline in real wages since the mid-1970s.²⁷ Is it any wonder that the annual turnover among preschool staff has tripled in the last decade, to well over 40 percent in many places?²⁸

A few states are attempting to address this critical situation. Michigan, for example, links salaries for preschool teachers to those of elementary teachers. Other states—including Connecticut and Minnesota—now provide state funds to help compensate staff in preschool programs. But these clearly are the exceptions. Nationwide, we are paying starvation wages to those who do the most essential teaching. Former Secretary of Commerce, Peter G. Peterson, challenged our priorities as a people when he asked: "Why do we continue to devote so many resources to comforting us at the end of life . . . while we pay a Head Start teacher less than \$10,000 to prepare us at the beginning of life?"²⁹

In addition to improving pay, we must ensure that all providers are well trained. Let's agree that the first years of learning matter most and that "educare" is not something that anyone can automatically do well. Many teachers in our kindergarten survey called for better-prepared caregivers, observing, as one teacher said, that "preschools and day cares are staffed all too often by people who are not properly trained. All too often developmentally inappropriate programs are offered. My heart breaks when I observe children who have been in day care becoming bullies, who are chronically depressed or very insecure. Better training could help children with those problems before they come to school."

In France, early childhood teachers have the equivalent of a master's degree.³⁰ Directors of child-care centers are pediatric nurses with training in public health and child development. Staff assistants usually have two years of college, plus a two-year course in child development. In contrast, here in the United States, only about one-third of the teachers in preschool centers have had any child-related training, and just 24 percent have the "Child Development Associate" credential recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which is granted for experience or a two-year degree.³¹ Even worse, thirty-one states require no training for home-care providers.

Some colleges provide leadership in early education. Tufts University, for example, has for years offered both undergraduate and graduate degree programs in early-childhood education. A unique interdisciplinary teacher-preparation program at the Eliot Pearson Department of Child Studies focuses on applied child development and on the needs of young children and their families. Courses on the arts, math, language and science—and their application to the field of early childhood education—are integral parts of the curriculum. The program requires ten courses in a broad spectrum of early childhood education, in addition to a liberal arts core and intensive practice. The Eliot Pearson Children's School, located on the Tufts campus, serves youngsters ages two through six and is a lab setting for students in the Child Study Program. The Tufts Educational Day-Care Center is nearby.

Evangelina H. Stephanakis, a graduate of the Tufts program, moved directly into a position as head teacher in a public-school kindergarten, and after graduate study, into college-level teacher preparation for the early childhood field. She credits the scope and depth of the Tufts courses, as well as the opportunities for observation and field work, with preparing her to work successfully as a teacher in early childhood education.³²

"We were observing in the lab school and working on projects from the beginning of the program," she said. "We took the children to visit different places in the community, everywhere from construction sites to meetings with the athletic teams of the University. One trip that I recall clearly was to the Post Office where children went behind the counter to see machines and people sort mail. They held mail bags, put letters in slots, took turns wearing the postal workers' hats and jackets. When they returned to the classroom, they set up a post office, made stamps out of everything, and continued that interest for weeks in the housekeeping and dress up area. The lab school has always been a model for me of what early childhood education should be."

The Bank Street College of Graduate Education in New York has likewise had a strong early childhood program for years and has been a leader in the field. The Bank Street College of Education offers graduate programs in the field of early childhood education, including an Infancy Program. On-site at Bank Street is the Family Center, a day care program that serves children six months to four years of age. The Center is also a demonstration site for teacher training in infant care.

The Center currently serves sixty children with an unusually high ratio of adults to students. There is one adult for every two children, and children are in mixed age groups as well. This situation is purposefully designed to simulate the home environment as closely as possible. According to Margo Hammond, the Center's Director, "These small family groupings provide ample opportunities for language development and social and emotional growth. There is always an adult to answer questions, and respond to the children."

At Teacher's College, Columbia University, the Center for Infants and Parents offers yet another unique training, practice, and research setting for masters and doctoral students. The emphasis is on parent-focused infant care, and all students work closely with parents during their on-site practicum. Here, too, the Center sees early child care as an opportunity to begin the education process for young children.

While we affirm the need for four-year programs, we also propose that the nation's community colleges become active partners in the ready-to-learn campaign, establishing associate degree programs in child care that would enable graduates to be designated as child-care professionals. While most community colleges already offer courses in child care, only about thirty-seven offer preschool degree programs. In 1989, about 700 students received degrees through these programs. We believe a new degree

is needed, and the program we propose would include a study of children's physical health, emotional, social and moral development, language enrichment, and general knowledge. An emphasis on teaching and caring would be threaded throughout the curriculum.

Community colleges are in a unique position to build partnerships in child care—an agenda true to their mission. Looking to the year 2000, we can imagine every one of the more than 12,000 community colleges in the country connecting with day-care and preschool programs in their areas, not only helping to train care providers, but also supplying them with continuing education and ongoing professional support. Community colleges could recruit mid-career professionals and retirees to their programs, thereby strengthening their mission of "building communities."

Dutchess Community College in New York, for example, now grants an early childhood education associate's degree. About half of those receiving the degree teach at child-care centers, while the rest transfer to four-year programs. Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland has a two-year associate degree in early childhood education, and the college recruits students for the program using public service ads. Cuyahoga also helps home day-care providers qualify for federal funding and provides a not-for-profit placement and referral service for graduates.

Miami-Dade Community College offers an associate degree in early childhood—a sixty-two credit program with a base in the liberal arts, a core of early childhood courses and electives, and practical field experience. The college also offers a competency-based, 750-hour certificate program in Childcare or Infant/Toddler Care to adults without high school diplomas. Miami-Dade has established a "satellite" public school on its campus to help preschoolers make the transition to elementary school. According to Muriel Lundgren, director of the Lab School and Children's Resource Center, Miami-Dade's goal is to offer a family-oriented program to meet the needs of children from birth to age eight.

Standing Rock Community College in Fort Yates, North Dakota, will offer a two-year degree program in early childhood education beginning in the fall of 1992. Standing Rock, a small institution located on an Indian reservation, will include courses in the liberal arts and child development, as advocated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The college also will give students practical experience in a child-care setting.

Finally, we urge that a message be sent nationwide and continuously reinforced. Working with very young children is both important and rewarding. Students should learn this at an early age. Every high school should provide and support opportunities for its students to volunteer as aides in preschools and to consider preschool education as a profession. Community colleges might offer scholarships and sponsor summer institutes that bring current and future preschool teachers together. And each community college surely could honor annually an outstanding preschool teacher. Last May in New York, for example, as part of that state's new attempt to coordinate and celebrate child-care services, the first certificates of merit were awarded to long-time day-care staff. Donna Langill of the New York State Council on Families and Children said that the awards are designed to honor those "who have served for long periods with too little appreciation or compensation." The awards are given to registered child-care providers who serve in centers or homes, in Head Start programs, or in pre-kindergarten programs run by public schools.

At the national level, legislation has been proposed to attract more qualified teachers into the schools, from the elementary grades through grade twelve. We strongly urge that day-care and preschool teachers be included in *any* legislative initiative aimed at improving the pool of teachers. In France, students of preschool education can attend college tuition-free and receive a stipend in return for pledging to work in a preschool program for five years after graduation.³³ We in this country also must do more to make child care a more respected profession with high standards of quality and prestige.

Most children will spend thousands of hours in day-care and preschool programs before they enter school, and the experiences they have there will profoundly shape the quality of their education. Knowing how vital the first years are to children, we must give priority to quality child care if all children are to be ready to learn when they enter elementary school. A Colorado kindergarten teacher said it all: "If every child could have a high-quality preschool year, many of our problems would be solved . . . and I'd be thrilled."

NOTES

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The Fourth Step

A RESPONSIVE WORKPLACE

Job pressures, last-minute shopping, chauffeuring children back and forth, paying bills, and a myriad of other chores keep parents on the go and, all too often, out of touch with their children. Here is how a single mother described the complications of her life: "I feel the biggest problem in the home is what I call after-work burnout.' I know this is an important time for my child. I should go over his school day and homework before it gets late and he becomes tired. I tell myself this every day, but by the end of my work day, all I can think about is getting home and relaxing before starting the chores."¹

If every child in America is to come to school ready to learn, we must have workplace policies that are family-friendly, giving parents time to be with their young children. Specifically we recommend a four-part strategy for the nation's employers to consider: First, we call for a parental leave program so that parents can bond with newborns. Second, we propose flextime and job-sharing arrangements so that home and family obligations can be blended. Third, we suggest that employers help provide child care for employees' children, and fourth, we recommend "parent days" so that parents can visit with their children at child-care centers.

Once "work life" and "home life" were inseparably intertwined. In yesterday's agrarian society, families lived on farms, in villages, or in towns. Mothers, fathers, and children worked side by side, forming a common economic enterprise and producing, with the help of friends and neighbors, the food and other staples needed to survive.² Life was hard, hours long, and financial rewards meager. Still, the social and economic dimensions of family life were intertwined, with children often serving as apprentices to parents or other mentors, or at least understanding what their parents did at work.

Today, less than 3 percent of American families live on farms and "the family economy has disappeared almost completely," according to the Carnegie Council on Children. Instead, most fathers and increasing numbers of mothers are working outside the home. In 1975, about seven million children under the age of three had mothers in the work force; today, the number has almost doubled (table 13). Viewed differently, nearly

60 percent of all mothers with preschool children—and approximately half of mothers with children under age one—are now working. In fact, the percent of mothers who work either full- or part-time is higher in this country than in many others around the world.

TABLE 13

Children Under Six with Mothers in the
Labor Force, 1970-1985, and Projected, 1990-1995

1970	29%
1975	37
1980	44
1985	49
1990	58
1995	66

SOURCE: Children's Defense Fund, *S.O.S. America!: A Children's Defense Budget*, 1990, 43.

As the gap between work life and family life widens, children find themselves squeezed out.³ Sociologist Arlie Hochschild, writing provocatively about contemporary family life, describes the situation this way: "For all the talk about the importance of children, the cultural climate has become subtly less hospitable to parents who put children first. This is not because parents love children less, but because a 'job culture' has expanded at the expense of a 'family culture.'"⁴ A kindergarten teacher in rural Mississippi made a similar observation: "I believe parents love their children, but in today's society everyone works and they are just plain tired. After all, the job comes first."⁵

In a recent survey, 81 percent of the respondents said that American parents do not spend enough time with their children.⁶ And in a survey conducted by *Better Homes and Gardens*, 77 percent of the respondents said they felt family life was in trouble. Seventy-six percent responded that they would be willing to reduce their income or slow

their career development in order to spend more time with their children.⁷ One parent wrote, "Next to divorce, the greatest problem I see with today's parents is that we are becoming stressed out! That is, trying to juggle meaningful careers, children, community and church activities, household chores. I do not feel we are shirking our responsibilities as parents, but we're simply taking on too much. I seriously believe this will affect our families in years to come."⁸

The point is clear: It is simply impossible today to talk about work and family life separately. If children are to get support at home and be prepared for school, family-friendly policies in the workplace are required—policies that not only strengthen the role of parents, but also give young children the care and guidance they need to be ready for school. A kindergarten teacher in our survey observed, "Since so many families are affected by dual careers, I firmly believe that employers must be more concerned about family needs. If children are to be ready for school, we need more on-site day care, more parental leave, more job sharing. After all, workers are parents, too."⁹

How, then, should we proceed? How can the obligations of parenting and the workplace be reconciled, to the benefit of both?

First, mothers and fathers need time off to be with their babies in the days and weeks following the birth. This is the time for bonding. Fifty years ago, the U.S. Department of Labor recommended that all working mothers be given six weeks of prenatal leave and eight weeks of leave after the baby comes—without sacrificing job and seniority benefits.¹⁰ Parental leave legislation has been introduced and debated in Congress each year since 1985 and is widely supported by the public. Indeed, nearly 80 percent of Americans surveyed believe that employers should be required to give new parents unpaid leave.¹¹

Giving parents time to interact intimately with their newborn, to bond, seems so basic, so essential to the well-being of the child. As child psychologist Burton White notes, "the more physical contact babies have in the first months of life, the better for all concerned."¹² Yet, a half century after the visionary concept of parental leave was first officially proposed, we have made little progress on the national level. Former U.S. Secretary of Labor William Brock says, "It's just incredible that we have seen the feminization of the work force with no more adaptation than we have had."¹³

Today, more than 125 countries in Asia, North and South America, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East have some form of government-mandated parental or maternity leave. Most of America's major trade partners not only guarantee job protection, but pay for leave as well. In many countries, working mothers are able to take an average of four to five months of *paid* leave, with benefits that amount to an average of 60 to 90 percent of their salaries. The United States is, in fact, the *only* industrialized country that does not have a national policy guaranteeing maternity and infant-care leave.¹⁴

In Finland, working women get thirty-five weeks of parental leave with full salary (table 14). In Japan, women have the right to a three-month leave at 60 percent of their pay. German mothers, who have worked for at least nine months are eligible for a fully paid leave beginning six weeks before a baby's birth and ending eight weeks after it. Ninety percent of eligible women in Germany take another four-month leave at a more modest rate of pay, and mothers who work in the public sector can actually take several years of unpaid leave while maintaining job protection.¹⁵ Some countries also give paid leave to fathers.

Table 14
Parental Leave Policies: International Comparisons

<u>Country</u>	<u>Weeks of Parental Leave</u>	<u>Number of Paid Weeks</u>	<u>Percent of Normal Pay</u>
Austria	16-52	20	100%
Canada	17-41	15	60
France	18	16	90
Finland	35	35	100
Germany	14-26	11-19	100
Italy	22-48	22	80
Japan	12	12	60
Sweden	12-51	38	90

SOURCE: Women at Work, International Labor Office Global Survey.

Those opposing parental leave in the United States are concerned about governmentally imposed mandates, fearing that more and more intervention will occur. We also realize that a leave policy may be difficult for smaller businesses with few employees. Yet evidence suggests that for many employers, and surely for the larger ones, parental leave can, in the long run, actually *save* money through increased employee retention and greater productivity.¹⁶ Sociologist Robert N. Bellah and his colleagues, in their new book, *The Good Society*, declare, "It might appear at the moment, when economic competitiveness is such an obsession, that Americans 'can't afford' to think about the family if it will in any way hinder our economic efficiency. Nothing could be more short-sighted. In the long run our economic life . . . depends on the quality of our people."¹⁷

An enlightened parental leave policy should be broadly available so that the most basic needs of all children can truly be met. It is simply not acceptable that here in America, where half the work force is female, new mothers are penalized—in some cases, forced to return to work well before recovering from childbirth; in others, required to leave their babies in the care of others before bonding; and in still others, deprived of their livelihoods. Every employer should make available to parents of newborn or newly adopted children at least twelve weeks of unpaid leave so that their children can receive the support and bonding that are so essential to their emotional and social well-being.

Joy Cone—a small company in Hermitage, Pennsylvania that produces a majority of the nation's ice cream cones—gives employees up to a year and a half of unpaid parental leave, with job protection.¹⁸ John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance, Hechinger, Ohio Bell, Arthur Andersen, US Sprint, AT&T, and Johnson & Johnson also offer employees one year of unpaid leave. Merck & Co., Inc. gives new parents a six-month leave with partial pay and benefits and allows them to take additional time without pay. Other companies—Lotus, for example—give employees a shorter period of *paid* parental leave, plus childbirth disability leave.¹⁹

The SAS Institute, a software company in Cary, North Carolina, gives parents up to a year of unpaid leave for child care or for other personal reasons.²⁰ Human resources director David Russo says that the company endorses the policy's use by either mother or father. "A lot of businesses look for all the reasons not to get involved with child care. Jim Goodnight, our founder, looked at why we *should* get involved," he said.²¹ Jane Helwig, a co-founder of SAS, herself a working parent, said that the difficulties she faced in balancing her roles as mother and executive paved the way for these family-friendly policies. Helwig describes the company's philosophy this way: "The feeling has

always been that if you treat employees as though they make a difference to the company, they *will* make a difference to the company."²²

The communications company US West, in Englewood, Colorado, has one of the most generous parental leave policies in the country: up to two years of unpaid leave for time with newborns and young children.²³ Board chairman Jack MacAllister calls this leave policy, plus the company's generous support of early education initiatives, an investment. He says, "Our children are our future. Our choices are to invest our energy in educating them or to become a nation without skilled workers, a region unable to compete in the global economy, a people whose progress is hampered by social inequity."²⁴

Hemmings Motor News, a magazine published in Bennington, Vermont, offers a variety of family-friendly policies, including six weeks of paid parental leave and another six months of unpaid leave for mothers and fathers. When Charles Waters and his wife had their first child, they took advantage of the policy, allowing Mr. Waters to spend two or three days each week in the office and the remaining days at home with the baby. The arrangement worked so well that the couple followed it again when their second child was born two years later. "It gave me an opportunity to spend some precious time with my children when they were infants, to bond with the babies," says Waters. "And by spending a few days a week in the office, I was still able to keep up with my work. The company's family policies and flexibility really helped our family."

In the absence of federal legislation, some states have moved ahead to create their own parental leave policies. A parental leave policy in Oregon, for example, requires companies with twenty-five or more employees to give parents twelve weeks of annual leave, including time off to care for sick family members. Oregon also has mandated maternity leave. Health-insurance benefits are maintained during leave periods and employees have the right to return to a former job or to a comparable position after a leave.²⁵

Rhode Island's parental leave legislation, which applies to all employers with fifty or more workers, is regarded by some as a national model. Under this program, employees who work at least thirty hours a week are eligible for thirteen weeks of parental leave, with their health-insurance benefits maintained. Employees who take

such leave are required to pay premiums for health care coverage into escrow accounts, but are subsequently reimbursed by their employer upon returning to their previous position—a right that is guaranteed.²⁶

Beyond allowing employees to spend time with their newborns, employers can also strengthen family life by promoting more flexible work schedules so that parents can modify the typical 9-to-5 routine and spend more time with their young children. For many parents, the normal work schedule conflicts with child-care arrangements and leaves too little time for interaction with their young ones. One mother in Washington State said, "Our school district began offering a preschool program for four-year-olds. I wanted my daughter to enroll, but the program ends at 3 p.m. and I work until 5."²⁷ In such circumstances, parents often spend lots of time on the phone, checking with neighbors or caregivers. Older children who fill in as baby-sitters often call their parents at work, seeking help. Should we be surprised that for some working parents, frustration builds and productivity declines?

One desirable policy, we believe, is "flextime," which makes it possible for mothers and fathers to mesh work and family schedules. In 1988, nearly 12 percent of all workers in this country were on some sort of flextime arrangement.²⁸ As schedules are adjusted, parents are able to spend more time with their children, giving them emotional support, reading to them, taking them on trips to the library. All of these experiences are so important to little children, not only to help them feel more secure but also to prepare them for school.

Different companies offer a variety of flextime policies to meet employees' needs. Pitney Bowes in Stamford, Connecticut, for example, allows individual departments to work out their own schedules, depending on their personnel needs. All employees are required to be at work during a core period from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.²⁹ But they are able to tailor their schedules before and after this period to accommodate their children's schedules. IBM also has a flextime program for employees. One design-engineer father in Kingston, New York, for example, has arranged his work schedule so that he can meet his daughter as she gets off the school bus.

Proctor & Gamble Company in Cincinnati, Ohio allows hourly employees to alter their work schedules by one hour at either end of the day. "These arrangements were

provided to meet the changing needs of employees," said Terry Loftus, a company spokesman. "The work setting is different than twenty years ago. There are more working moms, or working dads for that matter, and we have broadened the company's perceptions to meet these changing needs."³⁰

In 1974, the federal government became the first major employer to offer a more flexible work schedule to employees. Eight years later, in 1982, one-third of a million federal employees were participating in one of 1,554 alternative work-schedule programs in twenty different agencies. In a survey of these employees, nine out of ten said flextime was critically important in helping them solve their family and work problems, care for sick children, reduce baby-sitting expenses, attend school conferences, and spend more time with their children and families.³¹ Today, 19 percent of the federal work force uses flexible schedules, and other family-friendly policies are on the rise. According to federal managers, these reforms are essential to attract and retain a quality work force.³²

Another popular approach is "job sharing"—an arrangement allowing two part-time employees to staff a full-time position. Part-time work and "telecommuting"—doing work from home—have also become part of the new sensitivity to helping families blend work lives with private lives.³³ At American Express, for example, one middle-manager took the company's eight-week leave when she gave birth to her first child and then returned to her job full-time. She placed her daughter in day care for fifty hours a week, but after several months she began to feel that her life—and her baby's—was out of balance. The company agreed that she and a colleague, also a mid-level manager, could split their jobs. Thus, both employees were able to spend part of each week caring for family and part of it working.³⁴ Such arrangements can make crucial contributions to the lives of families—and thus help children become ready to learn.

Beyond these more formalized arrangements, there are times in every family when parents and children simply need time to share experiences and bring their separate worlds together. To meet this need, we propose "parent days," when employees are given time off to be with their children. After all, employees are excused from work to serve on juries or to vote. We urge that employers offer working mothers and fathers at least one parenting day each year so that they can spend time with their children.

Parenting days are an idea whose time has come. We suggest especially that all parents be with their child on the *first day* of day care or preschool—to get to know those who

will care for their child, become acquainted with their child's peers, and talk with other parents. First-hand encounters are the best ways for parents to discover what is really going on in their children's lives. It is really rather sad the way so many youngsters go off to preschools or to day-care centers early in the morning while parents go off to work, with no shared experiences day in and day out. In the evening, it is time to eat and then be off to bed. One single mother told us, "I come home at night and I know I should spend time with my child. But I have so much to do I just can't find time to do that."³⁵

Governor William F. Weld of Massachusetts recently announced that parents who are state employees may spend time in their children's schools "to visit classroom teachers, to volunteer in schools, and to serve in school governance." He also asked other employers to provide the same released time for such activities, beginning before the start of each school year. "I have challenged business to redefine the model of what constitutes good corporate citizenship," he added.

Proctor & Gamble gives parents half-day vacations to attend afternoon programs at their children's schools or to participate in school events.³⁶ North Carolina National Bank (NCNB) gives employees two hours of paid leave each week to work in schools, to participate in their children's school activities, or to confer with teachers.³⁷ NCNB also matches—dollar for dollar—an employee's financial contribution to his or her child's school.³⁸ "Successful parenting is as challenging as successful banking," says a bank official.

Two years ago, *Hemmings Motor News* began an "education participation day" program that gives employees two days off each year to spend in the local schools, to participate in volunteer activities or observe classes, for example. The number of employees who participated during the first year was small, but the company decided to continue the program and is urging more employees to take advantage of it. Interestingly, the program did not evolve from employee pressures; rather, it was initiated by the publisher's owners and managers, who are committed to family-friendly policies out of concern for the nation's children, families, and schools.³⁹

Another approach is to bring children right to the workplace, offering a child-care service close to where parents work. This approach solves transportation problems and makes it possible for families to meet in the middle of the day. Specifically, we recommend that employers consider ways to provide child care for employees' children,

especially preschoolers. This idea is not new. As early as 1816, the industrialist Robert Owen created the first employer-based child-care center in Scotland, establishing an "Infant School" at his mill for children ages one to twelve. During the Civil War, in the United States, businesses that produced ammunition and soldiers' clothing created on-site nurseries to care for the children of women employees. Day-care centers were established at hospitals and war-related businesses during World War I, and in the Second World War, nearly twenty-five hundred day-care centers were created at work sites, using government funds provided through the Lanham Act.⁴⁰

The good news is that corporate America is once again picking up on this proposal. Twenty years ago, only two hundred companies offered such assistance. Today, about four thousand do—dramatic evidence of increasing corporate concern about family life.⁴¹ And in 1981, Congress assured tax relief to companies for the capital expenses involved in building on-site day-care centers.⁴² These actions are widely supported by the public. In fact, two-thirds of Americans believe that employers should take the lead in helping families with child-care needs. Seventy-one percent feel that the private sector should become involved in child care and 45 percent say that business should fund it, even if that would mean reductions in wages and benefits.⁴³

Child care at the workplace is a policy that is good for children, parents, and business—everybody wins. Research has shown that parents who have access to on-site child care are more productive, take less leave time, and have better attitudes toward their workplaces than those who do not (table 15).⁴⁴ A comprehensive survey of four hundred and fifteen companies with "major" child-care programs revealed that they believe that programs such as on-site child care led to beneficial results: employees' morale improved, as did recruitment, absenteeism declined, and other key workplace conditions.⁴⁵

TABLE 15

Employers Reporting a Positive Effect from a Day-Care Program

Morale	90%
Recruitment	85
Public relations	85
Turnover	65
Absenteeism	53
Scheduling flexibility	50
Productivity	49

SOURCE: National Commission for Employment Policy.

A May 1988 article in *Personnel* magazine reported that "Nyloncraft, Incorporated, of Mishawaka, Indiana has attributed major reductions in turnover rates—and a drop in absenteeism to less than 3 percent—to its child-care programs. Lincoln National Life Insurance Company in Fort Wayne, Indiana says its child-care program led to reduced absenteeism and improved productivity. At Mercy Richards Hospital . . . 34 percent [of surveyed employees] reported that the [child-care] center had been a factor in their accepting jobs at the hospital."⁴⁶

Patagonia, an outdoor clothing and equipment manufacturer in Ventura, California, has an on-site child-care center for eighty infants and children. Yvon Chouinard, Patagonia's founder and co-owner, says Patagonia supports its center because satisfied employees stay with the company. "Frankly, to replace an employee costs thousands of dollars, so if we can save just a few employees over the year, we're making money," he said. "And that doesn't even factor in lost time due to distractions from child-care problems, improved morale, and lots of other things. Plus, we get suppliers who come into the cafeteria and see mothers eating lunch with their kids. And it has a great effect on them. They trust a company that does that. In fact, most of them want to come to work here. It's good advertising, that's for sure. And it's just plain good business."⁴⁷

Consider again how critically important such time together is to parents and especially to children. Breakfast is often a meal consumed on the run, and by evening parents and children alike are often tired. That is why, for a child, the chance to have lunch with a parent—uninterrupted time to talk and to share the excitement and troubles of the day—can be so precious and so emotionally reassuring.

The law firm of Akin, Gump, Hauer, and Feld has its own child-care center—"the place for kids"—across the street from its downtown Washington office, with an emergency child-care service that operates seven days a week. Susan Suarez, who directs the center, has a program that kids love: outings to parks, picnics at the zoo, swimming during the summer, and movies—all involving expeditions by public transportation, with babies in strollers and the young children holding hands with their buddies. Attorney Harriet Lipkin's two young children, Joshua and Stephanie, view the center as "their place." If Lipkin's regular child-care arrangements fall through—if her sitter is sick or on vacation—the children can go to the Akin, Gump center. The firm also has a Child-care Committee, a support group for parents, monthly brown-bag lunches with speakers who talk about parenting issues, and even a parents' newsletter called "Small Talk."⁴⁸

Ben and Jerry's, the ice-cream company in Waterbury, Vermont, has a Children's Center, located in a nearby renovated farmhouse, that cares for children from six weeks to six years old. "We have all found that having children at the workplace is a very humanizing experience," said Beth Wallace, the director. "Our toddlers and preschoolers visit the plant and have seen everything from ice-cream production to shipping processes. When infants are in the yard and the other children are playing, parents and other workers wave at them from the windows. There are lots of smiling faces on both sides."⁴⁹

Not surprisingly, small companies—those with fewer than two hundred and fifty employees—tend to have the most difficulty offering child care. They may be sympathetic to the parents' need for on-site care, but find that it is just not economically feasible for them to set up their own in-house facilities. Perhaps the best approach for small businesses is a collaborative arrangement, in which several companies jointly sponsor a child-care center. Alternatively, small companies can give employees child-care grants to subsidize the costs of care at a local center, or at the very least, provide a referral service to advise parents about child-care options in the area. A group called "Care Connectors, Inc.," for example, provides a computerized

national "on-line child-care database" for corporate clients wanting to help employees locate day-care and family-care centers.⁵⁰ All employers, in fact, should help their employees locate, evaluate, and if possible, pay for quality child-care and preschool services either on-site or at local centers.

Some large employees, too, have chosen to subsidize child-care centers rather than provide on-site care. IBM, for example, in a renewed commitment to child care, has set up a \$22 million fund to increase the supply and improve the quality of child-care programs. Grants will be disbursed over a five-year period. John Boudreaux, an IBM spokesperson, says the aim of this initiative is "to increase the range of options for employees in a community from infant care to family settings or large group settings." IBM believes that its more diversified program offers employees more options than on-site care would, better meets each employee's particular needs, and makes IBM "a good neighbor."⁵¹ To receive IBM funds, new child-care centers must meet accreditation standards set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Ten years ago, the city of Irvine, California, promised its citizens that by 1992 adequate child care would be available to all parents who needed it. Through a door-to-door survey the city found numerous gaps in child-care services. In response, Irvine's child-care spaces have increased more than 80 percent over the past five years. This includes a \$1.2 million municipally-funded child-care facility in Irvine's new civic center, which reserves space for the children of city employees. Irvine provides after-school care for latchkey children and offers incentives to developers who include child-care space in all new commercial and business projects.⁵²

Clearly, all across the nation much is happening to improve workplace policies for families. In both the public and private sectors, the needs of families and children are being recognized—and addressed. But, once again, the services available are unequally distributed. Despite all the effort, just 17 percent of the big firms in this country—those with at least ten thousand employees—and only 3 percent of small businesses—those with one hundred or fewer employees—offer child-care services, according to a recent survey.⁵³ Further, very few states, New York and California among them, now offer child-care services to state employees.⁵⁴

During the past decade, American business leaders have been vigorously involved in school reform, reminding us just how directly education is linked to economics and how our ability to compete in world markets is closely tied to the quality of our schools. In

the coming decade, corporate America should continue to focus on school reform, of course. But special attention also should be given to the well-being of young children, because corporate involvement is essential to the success of children, families, and schools.

As Stephen E. Ewing, president and CEO of Michigan Consolidated Gas Company, states: "We need to change attitudes about day care so that it is no longer seen as a personal need, but rather a public expectation—a way to invest in the youth of this nation starting at birth, a way to fund proper development, rather than waiting until preteen and teen years when we all too often have to pay for remediation—and sometimes—detention reform."⁵⁵

To forge a strong alliance between business and the ready-to-learn campaign, contributions will be required from within the business community itself. Specifically, we recommend that a national Ready-to-Learn Clearinghouse be established to help employers develop family-friendly policies, practices, and programs and to gather data on the full range of programs being offered. The proposed clearinghouse would be an information center for companies seeking good ideas and responding to reports from family-friendly projects. The clearinghouse also could give special recognition to companies that have imaginative family-friendly policies. The Ready-to-Learn Clearinghouse might well be established within an existing national business organization, such as the National Alliance of Business.

It is clear that workplace policies are slowly but surely being redesigned, as employers recognize that workers are parents, too, whose children need them, especially when they are little. And so it seems that America may be learning lessons from its past. When work and family life were inseparably connected, parents and children worked together, with youngsters learning from older mentors. But as work moved outside the home, family life was fractured, and children and parents lost touch.

As America nears the beginning of a new century, we envision reconnecting work and family life—not in the old patterns, but in new ones for a new era. Surely in this country, where family life is given such strong rhetorical support, we can find ways to provide practical support as well.

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 51. Verbal communication with John Boudreaux, International Business Machines Corporation, Purchase, New York, September 1991.
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TELEVISION AS TEACHER

In the summer of 1938, essayist E. B. White sat in a darkened room and watched transfixed as a big electronic *x* began projecting eerie, shimmering images into the world. It was White's introduction to TV. In response he wrote: "I believe television is going to be the test of the modern world, and that in this new opportunity to see beyond the range of our vision, we shall discover either a new and unbearable disturbance of the general peace or a saving radiance in the sky. We shall stand or fall by television—of that I am quite sure."¹

Next to parents, television is perhaps a child's most persistent, and most influential teacher, and there is no way for a national ready-to-learn campaign to succeed fully unless the television industry becomes an active partner in the process. Parents surely must monitor the viewing habits of their children. But better programming is required too, and we propose that all commercial networks schedule at least one hour of programming for preschool children every week—with school-readiness commercials. We suggest, as well, that a Ready-to-Learn Cable Channel be created and that a national conference of industry leaders and sponsors be convened to explore how television can, during the decade of the nineties, contribute to the educational enrichment of preschool children.

The time little children spend watching TV is truly awesome. The typical six-month-old infant, peering through the rails of a crib, views television about one and a half hours every day. A five-year-old watches an hour a day more than that. By the time he or she sets foot in a kindergarten classroom, a child is likely to have spent more than *four thousand hours* in front of what amounts to an electronic preschool. All told, this means that nineteen million preschoolers watch about fourteen billion hours of television every year.²

Television can spark curiosity and open up distant worlds to children. Through its magic, youngsters can travel to the moon or the bottom of the sea. They can visit medieval castles, take river trips, or explore imaginary lands. But TV's great potential as a teacher has, in the best sense, remained largely unfulfilled. Newton N. Minow,

former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, recently described television as "the most important institution in America. All of television is education," he said. "The question is, what are we teaching and what are we learning?"³

Television began with such promise. In the November 1950 issue of *Good Housekeeping* one enthusiastic mother wrote, "By and large I think television is Mama's best friend . . . (and) Kukla, Fran, and Ollie are one cogent reason. . . . Television widens horizons. Surprisingly often it brings into the home good plays, competently acted."⁴ Further, the mother noted, "an inspired TV teacher, Dr. Roy K. Marshall, talks about earthquakes, the solar system, and nuclear fusion. Seeing what he can accomplish in fifteen minutes proves the great potentialities of television in the field of education."⁵

What today's children actually encounter every weekday afternoon is not Kukla, Fran, and Ollie or a latter-day "Dr. Marshall," but enough soap operas to flood a laundromat. On Saturday morning, during the so-called "children's hour," they are served a steady diet of junk food commercials⁶ and cartoons that contain, on average, twenty-six acts of violence *every sixty minutes*.⁷

No one can deny that television has a spectacular capacity to bring world events into our living rooms and connect us with others around the globe. But in the past thirty years, TV's great promise to children—that it could enrich their lives and contribute to their readiness for school—has faded from the screen. This multibillion dollar industry has decreed that the airwaves are overwhelmingly for adults, not children.

The precise impact of television on a child's attitude toward school and learning remains unclear. Still, kindergarten teachers in our survey spoke with feeling and frustration about how television creates passivity in children, a lethargy toward learning, an impatience with anything that requires extended concentration. Teachers believe that the continuous blur of images on TV shortens children's attention span and reduces learning to "impressions." One teacher remarked, "I feel I have to tap dance to keep their interest. Just lecturing is a sure groaner. Students just want to be passive viewers. It's frustrating to have to be ABC, CBS, and NBC when I really want to be PBS and NPR!" Another observed, "TV watching must be curbed. Kids no longer know how to play basic kid games." Another kindergarten teacher wrote: "Television has taught children about 'Ninja Turtles,' but they have no idea what *real* turtles are or anything about them. TV is a shocking case of child neglect."

Teachers also feel that television causes children to be more combative. "I really believe that TV-watching stimulates aggressive behavior and decreases the ability of children to play together without some form of fighting," one teacher wrote. It's easy to make television the source of all social ills. Still, psychologist Daniel Anderson, after exhaustively examining the research about TV's impact on the mental development of children, concluded: "Although there are questions about the degree, there's no question that television promotes violent behavior. Kids do absorb messages from television shows, but that doesn't make them good judges of the messages they're absorbing. Right now, they're showing kids a lot of violent behavior and that's reflected in kids' attitudes and outlooks."⁸

Inga Sonesson, a sociologist at Sweden's Lund University, monitored the behavior and TV-viewing tastes of two hundred children over a ten-year period. "We found," she wrote, "a clear and unmistakable statistical correlation between excessive television and video viewing on the one hand and the development of antisocial behavior and emotional problems on the other." Sonesson reported that six-year-olds who watched less than two hours of television daily were far less likely than those who watched more to develop learning difficulties or emotional problems. As to those who logged more TV time, she noted: "Teachers reported that these were the children who were more aggressive, more anxious, and had greater problems maintaining concentration."⁹

Whether television helps or hinders children depends, in large measure, on the extent to which parents control the dial. Most TV programs are simply not meant for little children. They are at best distracting, at worst degrading. According to a Harvard University study, 70 percent of today's parents feel that children are watching too much TV, and 40 percent believe that such viewing has a negative effect on their kids. And yet many parents who otherwise are attentive to other negative influences in their children's lives, leave the television set on all day long with little or no guidance. Pediatricians at the University of California found that barely 15 percent of parents with children between the ages of three and eight actually *guide* their children in selecting programs (table 16). Two-thirds do not frequently discuss program content with their children, and 68 percent said they often use television to "entertain" their children.¹⁰

For their part, children told us that occasionally they do sit in front of the TV with their parents in the evening, but that there is very little interaction with them. TV programs and messages come and go without conversation or critique. One kindergarten teacher said: "Frankly, I find it shocking that parents allow their kids to sit in front of the TV,

hour after hour, watching almost anything, good or bad." Another teacher admonished, "Parents should censor what children watch on TV, and restrict the time they spend watching it."

TABLE 16

Parents Who Report Various Family Television Viewing Habits

Parent guides child's selection of TV programs	15%
Frequent parent-child discussion of TV programs viewed	38
Parent often uses TV as child's entertainment	66

SOURCE: AJDC, March, 1990.¹¹

Some parents do set strict rules for TV viewing; others have actively banned it altogether. One recent trend in family development is a national campaign called "TV Busters," launched by a teacher in Plymouth, Minnesota. "TV Busters" asks students to stop watching all TV for twenty days—except for news and educational programs—and to keep a record of what they do instead. The results are fascinating. Some children spend more time riding their bicycles, or playing soccer, or raking leaves with their fathers, while some others read. To date, 37,000 children in one hundred and fifty-four schools in thirty-nine states have joined "TV Busters." It has even been endorsed by Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson, who this year proclaimed one week in October "TV Buster Week" for the entire state. Why not try this in every school, in every state, every year?

Still, it is unrealistic to assume that busy parents can or should restrict TV viewing altogether. Television is a fact of life and has great potential. What parents *can* do is

become much better informed about what their children watch and much more active in guiding viewing habits—just as they guide decisions about eating and sleeping. The problem is that the huge menu of programs available makes it almost impossible for a parent to *stay* informed about scheduling, let alone make sophisticated judgments about which programs would most benefit young children. We are therefore convinced that more and better guidance is required. Specifically, we recommend that a *Ready-to-Learn Television Guide* be prepared, at least monthly, listing programs on both commercial and cable channels that have special educational value for young children.

Recently, the Public Broadcasting System and forty-three cable companies joined to publish a monthly television guide for junior and senior high school students. The magazine, *Cable in the Classroom*, lists programs by topic and is available to schools without charge. Let's expand this idea, creating a *Ready-to-Learn Television Guide* for preschool viewers that could be included in newspapers or published independently. Using the guide, parents could learn about programs recommended for preschoolers and design a weekly TV-watching schedule for their children.

Giving guidance to parents is important. But more and better programming is also required. To develop more appropriate and educational shows, the television industry must itself acknowledge the impact that TV has on little children and accept its responsibility to serve its youngest audience well. Will this be the decade when television's early promise as a "saving radiance" for children is finally fulfilled?

Even before the advent of television, the Communications Act of 1934 sought to ensure that the airwaves would serve the best interests of all people—including, of course, children.¹² Since then, creative steps have been taken to meet the Act's public-service mandate. Every morning for years, "Ding Dong School" and "Captain Kangaroo" greeted millions of little children who were enthralled that someone was talking directly to them. They heard good conversations and learned exciting lessons about life. These were, in fact, ready-to-learn programs at their very best.

Sadly, though, these programs fell victim to "the bottom line," as profits were placed before children. And as a result, children's programming has been neglected. It is absolutely disgraceful that today no commercial network airs a single regularly-scheduled educational program for young children. Tricia McLeod Robin, president of

the National Council for Families and Television, believes that creative television could help preschoolers in many ways. "In my conversations with parents, I hear how worried they are about their youngsters," she says. "But parents are in a difficult time. They know the value of nurturing, but they know they are not at home. They are desperate for help and they will grab onto anything they think will help their child. Television should not just be a partner in the ready-for-school campaign, it should be the leader."

Certainly, a few examples of outstanding children's programming can be found. PBS, in particular, has been highly successful at serving young viewers. For over a quarter century, "Sesame Street"—featuring Jim Henson's wonderfully entertaining characters, including Kermit the Frog, Big Bird, and every toddler's favorite, the Cookie Monster—has been viewed by millions of children all around the world. One might quarrel with some segments or with the teaching methods used from time to time, but overall, evidence supports the conclusion that "Sesame Street" enhances learning, especially of basic skills. This historic, pioneering effort—a creative collaboration between the federal government and the private sector—has contributed, and continues to contribute dramatically to the school-readiness of children.

"Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" is yet another example of television's "promise fulfilled." Children who watch Mister Rogers develop feelings of self-worth, understand their world better, learn essential skills, and stretch their imaginations. According to researchers, children who regularly spend time with "Mister Rogers" are more likely to help another child.¹³ A recent study at day-care centers in Ohio found that "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" helped children become more cooperative, self-confident, and creative. Viewers of the program were less aggressive than nonviewers and made greater gains in their verbal skills. Teachers noted that they also become better conversationalists.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting continues its leadership in the field of children's programming. In November 1991, it announced funding for a new, thirty-minute preschool series, "The Puzzle Factory," which will be the first new daily preschool television series since "Sesame Street." The new series, designed to complement both "Sesame Street" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood," will teach socialization and life skills. Slated to air on public television by 1993, this major series will feature six principal characters, multicultural puppets at work in a make-believe puzzle workshop, whose stories will encourage children to "make choices, take risks,

and experiment."¹⁴ Celebrity guest stars, animal mascots, and a variety of other characters will also appear in some episodes. According to executive producer Cecily Truett, "This is a people show, and these are 'human being' lessons. The essence of this program is that people are individuals. Each of us is extremely unique."¹⁵

Another PBS program, "Reading Rainbow," introduces young readers to a book, presenting the setting and background of the story in rich detail. And several years ago, the network's "Ramona," a series based on the stories of award-winning children's author Beverly Cleary, won rave reviews and a huge following. "Shining Time Station" was another award-winner for PBS, featuring former Beatle Ringo Starr as a train conductor. Action for Children's Television describes the show as "basic life lessons gently taught in an enchanted setting."¹⁶ "Long Ago and Far Away," a series featuring children's literature from foreign countries, included shows based on *The Pied Piper*, *The Wind in the Willows*, and Russian folktales. The response to the series was tremendous: Teachers deluged public television station WGBH in Boston with requests for its published teacher's guide.

"Barney and the Backyard Gang," a new program for preschoolers scheduled for spring of 1992, features a big purple dinosaur who has adventures with his young friends in a day-care playground and classroom. Two Dallas mothers on extended maternity leave created "Barney" when they found it impossible to find good programs for their own preschoolers. Shari Lewis' "The Lamb Chop Play-Along" is also scheduled to premiere soon. The show is designed to encourage young children to sing, count, rhyme, and hop along with Shari and Lamb Chop.

Another notable exception, "Brooklyn Bridge," appeared this fall on CBS. This prime-time show, one of the few that consistently promotes positive social behavior for youngsters, includes no fumbling parents, no off-color jokes, no sexual allusions. The show wears its values proudly on its sleeve: the big brother looking out for the little one, the love of grandparents for their grandchildren, human commonalities overcoming ethnic divisions. Perhaps the most amazing feat of all is that the writing is so good, the filming techniques so interesting, and the plots so well constructed that anyone from age four to one hundred and four would be entertained and would profit from the encounter.

We recommend that each of the major commercial broadcast networks—CBS, NBC, ABC, and now Fox—offer, at an appropriate time, at least one hour of preschool

educational programming every week. Further, for these programs, all networks should forego the traditional ratings race, as it is inappropriate for evaluating children's programs.

If America hopes to achieve its first education goal, television must become part of the solution, not the problem. Inaction can no longer be tolerated. The four major commercial broadcast networks, which influence the lives of so many children so profoundly, should be leading the way. We acknowledge the reality of the marketplace, but is it too much to ask that each network devote at least *one hour* of quality television every week to our youngest children?¹⁷ It seems reasonable to ask that for just one hour each week, they will be motivated, not by their numerical ratings, but by the quality of their contributions to children.

The responsibility for children's programming reaches beyond the networks, as well, to the advertisers who buy time and nervously watch the ratings. Many good ideas for programs are rejected because potential sponsors refuse to use their advertising dollars to support them. We therefore believe that those who manufacture and market children's products—such as toys, cereals, and fast foods—must also recognize their special obligation to support high-quality programming for preschoolers, and devote at least some of the money they make from sales to support creative programs. Such an investment would not only be good for children, but in the long run, for the nation, too.

We must also look more closely at the advertisements that children see. A television commercial shapes young lives in subtle and not so subtle ways. Why else would sponsors spend millions on "children's programs"? While older children show less interest in commercials,¹⁸ three- and four-year-olds "often show an increase in attention when commercials come on."¹⁹ And what do they see? According to one observer, "a child watching TV today sees ads for sugared cereals, candy, snack foods, and sugared drinks in an unceasing barrage and learns nothing of the essentials for a balanced diet."²⁰

The Children's Television Act of 1990 sets limits on the amount of time devoted to advertisements during children's programs. After the 1991 holiday season, commercials can air ten and one-half minutes per hour on weekends and twelve minutes per hour on weekdays. Although this marks progress, a huge amount of time

will still be available to market products to kids. Further, while we are attending to the length of commercials, we have not addressed their content. Cutting commercial time by just a minute and a half an hour may reduce the bad, but fail to advance the good.

We are therefore also convinced that, whenever possible, commercials should be used to promote learning. Why not have commercials that include colorful segments on nutrition, exercise, and exciting books? Why not "advertise" highlights from history, interesting scientific facts, or lessons on social confidence and getting along with others? And why not feature dynamic kindergarten teachers who tell children about what their first day at school will be like? From 1973 to 1985, ABC aired "School House Rock," innovative mini-programs that were presented as learning commercials.²¹ Through music, rhyme, and animation children learned about grammar, math, and American history in five-minute segments interspersed throughout the Saturday morning viewing block. Millions of young adults still remember the "Conjunction-Junction" song, as well as explanations of history from an animated Thomas Jefferson. We recommend that every sixty-minute segment of children's programming on commercial broadcast networks include at least one "Children's Series Commercial" that focuses on the physical, social, or educational needs of children.

Networks could build learning commercials around the celebrities and characters featured in their regular programming. Stars from sports, music, and the movies could donate their time to entertain and inform children at the same time. Further, cartoon characters might actually "leave the set," and for sixty seconds become teachers. Even more important, perhaps, would be an initiative aimed at parents. Children's Action Network and the American Academy of Pediatricians recently prepared commercials featuring Robin Williams and Whoopi Goldberg on the importance of having young children immunized against childhood diseases. The possibilities for educational commercials of this sort, as a part of the Ready-to-Learn Campaign, are almost endless.

To fulfill its obligation to our children, children's television needs sustained private and public funding. Last year, Congress passed the Children's Television Act, which requires the Federal Communications Commission, in granting broadcast licenses, to consider the extent to which stations are serving "the educational and informational needs of children," defined as anything that "furthers the positive development of the child." But without enforcement, these are empty words. In practice, the new

regulations are so broadly interpreted that observers are worried that certain commercials, particularly those that link products to program heroes, can be counted as children's programming.

Further, the Children's Television Act also created a new National Endowment for Children's Educational Television to help fund non-commercial, educational television for children. The problem is that this new endowment is now only an empty shell with an extremely small staff and very little money. We urge that Congress appropriate funds to support the preparation of high-quality programs, especially for preschoolers, making it possible for the Endowment to produce at least *one* new quality series.²² The appropriation should be increased annually, so that additional programs can be produced. Specifically, we urge that the federal government appropriate \$20 million immediately for the National Endowment for Children's Educational Television to support the creation of programs for preschool children. By 1995, this funding should be increased to \$100 million a year.

Cable television—a powerful, fast-growing part of the industry—also should fulfill a special obligation to serve young children. Some cable networks have already begun. A Disney Channel program, "Under the Umbrella Tree," teaches preschoolers to use the telephone and doorbell, share with their friends, and help others. "You and Me, Kid" deals with parent-child relationships, and such classics as "Winnie the Pooh," "Babar," and "Pinocchio" make up Disney's preschool line-up. Nickelodeon bills itself as a children's channel, offering a two-hour block of preschool programs each day, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. "Eureeka's Castle" includes puppets, comedy, music, and adventure. "Sharon, Lois & Bram's Elephant Show" takes its little viewers on adventure trips, accompanied by an elephant. "Fred Penner's Place" uses stories, songs, and games to entertain and educate young viewers. But such programs, though well ahead of the commercial channels, are still few and far between.

Some creative cable stations manage to gather the funds necessary to produce their own children's shows. WCVB in Boston, for example, has created three programs for preschoolers. Though produced some time ago, WCVB still airs "Captain Bob" on Saturdays at 6:30 a.m., where a grandfatherly man teaches children to draw and appreciate the environment. "Jabberwocky," also an older show, uses live-action actors and puppets to entertain and educate three- to six-year-olds each week. "A Likely

Story," the newest of WCVB's productions, follows a librarian and her bookmobile on adventures through "The Magic Book," and encourages four- to eight-year-olds to read. WCVB produced "A Likely Story" with the intention of offering it to other stations through syndication, allowing them to spend additional money on the production. WRLK in Columbia, South Carolina, another exceptional station, has produced two preschool programs: "The Playhouse," a six-part series that emphasizes self-esteem, and "Let's Play Like," a series devoted to imagination.

Currently, the LIFETIME channel offers programming for parents of preschoolers. Beginning in December, for example, it will air "Your Baby and Child with Penelope Leach," which will explore developmental changes in children from birth to preschool. The Family Channel features "American Baby" and "Healthy Kids" on alternate weekday afternoons. The American Academy of Pediatrics consults on the content of these programs, and reviews both the programs and all accompanying commercials for language and content.²³

Pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton also hosts two cable programs—"What Every Baby Knows" and "Growing Up Together"—that cover child development during the first five years of life. Each episode features a specific issue, such as discipline, fears, working moms, preparing for a baby, and the child's transition to preschool. "Families need value systems they can believe in," says Brazelton. "This series will give us a chance to identify value systems in different groups around the country so that parents will have some choices."²⁴

In November 1991, the Family Channel presented a one-hour special called "Discovering the First Year of Life." Co-hosted by *American Baby* editor Judith Nolte and pediatrician Dr. Steve Selov, the program was designed to help parents understand each stage of physical, social, and emotional development that occurs during the first year of life, and to recognize just how critical that first year is to their child. The program advised parents about the kinds of behaviors babies exhibit during each stage, and about what parents could do to best meet their baby's needs during that time. Throughout the hour, parents and their babies interacted, babies demonstrated their physical development skills, and parents shared their feelings about their infants at each stage. The program was sponsored solely by manufacturers of baby products and featured only one commercial—demonstrating how to diaper a baby.

The time has come to recognize that children from birth to five are a very special audience with very special needs. Today we have cable channels devoted exclusively to sports and weather, sex and rock music, health, and around-the-clock news. Why not make at least *one cable channel* a ready-to-learn channel, devoted solely to the needs of preschool children? Such a channel would assure parents of at least one place on the TV dial that they and their preschoolers could turn to with confidence—one reliable source of enriching programming all day long for young children. In addition, day-care directors and preschool directors could incorporate programs on the channel into their daily schedules. We recommend therefore that a "Children's Service Channel" should be established to offer programming dedicated exclusively to preschool children.

For nearly fifty years, children's television advocates have fought endless battles to improve programming, and they have won a few victories. But overall, the gains have been so minimal, so embarrassingly inadequate. While congressional committees debate how many "hard sell" commercials should be included in our children's shows, hardly a thought is given to the ways television might contribute to meeting the educational, social, and moral needs of children. And while the current crisis is driven by the economics of the television industry, no one is providing leadership in finding ways for television to live up to its great potential in educating children.

The time has come, we believe, for television industry leaders, children's advocates, and potential program sponsors to come together to consider just how children's television, especially programs for preschoolers, might be creatively developed as part of a national ready-to-learn campaign.

Twenty years ago, television advertisers, educators, classroom teachers, and television producers participated in a three-day symposium on how to develop quality programming for our children and how to find better ways to use television as an influence. Out of the meeting came resolutions and specific suggestions for programming. The result was the development of children's program departments at the networks, new programs, and the after-school specials.²⁵ Today, we need the same sort of event to direct attention on ways to improve the television programming for our young children.

We specifically recommend that a National Ready-to-Learn Television Conference be convened by an organization such as the National Council on Television and Families. The proposed forum might provide some answers to these questions: What would be appropriate programming for preschool children? How might educational commercials be prepared? From what public and private sources can innovative producers get financing? And finally, what kinds of programs, and commercials, would best develop a child's readiness?

We see the nineties as a decade when television's promise to our children can finally be fulfilled—a time when ready to learn becomes the mandate for the nation. The promise, the possibility within our reach, is to enrich the lives of *all* children, to give them an exciting new window to the world, with words and sounds and pictures that dramatically enrich their readiness to learn. Newton Minow, in commenting on the thirtieth anniversary of the speech in which he called television "a vast wasteland," said: "A new generation now has the chance to put the vision back into television . . . to travel from the wasteland to the promised land, and to make television a saving radiance in the sky."²⁶ We could not agree more.

NOTES

1. E. B. White, "One Man's Meat," *Harper's Magazine*, 177 (1938): 553.
2. If 19 million preschoolers watch roughly two hours a day times 365 days a year, they watch 14 billion hours of TV a year.
3. Newton Minow, "How Vast the Wasteland Now?," May 9, 1991 speech at Columbia University, New York, Gannett Foundation Media Center, 1991.
4. Bianca Bradbury, "Is Television Mama's Friend or Foe?" *Good Housekeeping*, November 1950, 58.
5. Bianca Bradbury, "Is Television Mama's Friend or Foe?" *Good Housekeeping*, November 1950, 263.
6. The Center for Science in the Public Interest reports that over 200 commercials for high-sugar and high-fat junk food appear each Saturday morning.
7. The National Coalition on Television Violence report, April 1991.
8. Daniel Anderson testified before the U.S. Senate in the April, 1989 hearings on "Education, Competitiveness, and Children's Television." "The Impact of Children's Education: Television's Influence on Cognitive Development," U.S. Department of Education, April, 1988, 8.
9. Inga Sonesson, *Forskolebarn och TV*, [Elementary Schoolchildren and TV]. Stockholm: Esselte Studium, 1979.
10. "Children's Television-Viewing Habits and the Family Environment," *American Journal of Diseases and Children*, vol. 144, March 1990, 359.
11. "Children's Television-Viewing Habits and the Family Environment," *American Journal of Diseases and Children*, vol. 144, March 1990, 359.
12. Robert M. Liebert and Joyce N. Sprafkin, *The Early Window*, (Pergamon Press, 1988), 12.
13. *The Early Window*, 232.
14. CPB Report, November 18, 1991. Vol. X, No. 23.

15. John Wilner, "Preschool Series to Teach Life Skills," *Current: The Public Telecommunications Newspaper*, November 18, 1991, Vol. 1 and 7.
16. ACT Awards program, June 1990
17. According to ABC's Affiliate Relations department, ABC offers affiliate stations 22 hours of prime-time, 5 hours of late-night, 22.5 hours of news, 5 hours of children (cartoons on Saturday morning), and 25 hours of day-time programming each week for a total of 79.5 hours. NBC and CBS offer counterparts for these ABC shows, for the most part. This figure does NOT include sports broadcasts on the weekends because these programs vary so greatly in length.
18. *The Early Window*, 166.
19. *The Early Window*, 166.
20. ACT, 1972, 2-3.
21. Verbal communication, Capital Cities\ABC, Inc., Public Relations, Network Programming Department, November 1991.
22. Footnote to come
23. Verbal communication Sara Lowe, November, 1991.
24. Source: LIFETIME press releases.
25. Verbal communication, James Duffy, November 1991.
26. Newton Minow, "How Vast the Wasteland Now?," May 9, 1991 speech at Columbia University. New York: Gannett Foundation Media Center, 1991.



The Sixth Step

NEIGHBORHOODS FOR LEARNING

Every child, before marching off to school, should spend lots of time outside, running up and down the sidewalk, climbing trees, sitting on fire hydrants, romping in the grass, scrambling in and out of discarded boxes—observing what goes on and responding to it. A child's world should be a safe and friendly place, with open spaces that invite play and spark the imagination. If every child is to be well prepared for school, we must have neighborhoods for learning.

Children give life to neighborhoods. Neighborhoods, at their best, give something back. British social critic Colin Ward noted that a community that is really concerned about its youngsters "will make the *whole* environment accessible to them."¹ Yet, in our rush to build cities, towns, and suburbs, we have somehow forgotten the needs of children. We constructed glitzy banks, and hotels that look like Taj Mahals. We erected high-rise apartments and office towers that soar into the sky. But in crowded cities, there is, quite literally, no place left for safe, creative play.

Lewis Mumford, in *The Myth and the Machine*,² reminds us that as human societies grew from small villages into large impersonal cities, they gained in economic productivity, but compromised their ability to meet humankind's deepest yearning—the longing for social bonds and shared meaning.³ As we spoke with teachers, parents, and children, we concluded that this is precisely what is happening in America today.

Vacant lots are gone, or filled with debris, cars jam the streets, sidewalks are crowded. There is a rising tide of violence. While visiting schools, we often asked youngsters to describe their neighborhoods. A young boy in a big midwestern city said, "It's bad. They shoot any time, when you get out of school, they shoot. I stay in the house." An eighth grader from rural New Mexico told us, "You don't know if somebody is going to go to our house and do something—while I'm there by myself and stuff." An eighth-grader from an East Coast community reported, "I'm often scared going back and forth to school. Kids are after me. I'll fight if I have to."

At their worst, the pathologies of uncaring, destructive neighborhoods reveal themselves in the rise of juvenile street gangs. Interestingly, given the violent behavior on the part of many, individual gang members often will reveal that antisocial behavior is not the only thing on their minds. In interviews they will talk of their need for "safety," "respect," "connections" to others, and "something to do" as justification for their gang participation.

When we surveyed fifth- and eighth-graders several years ago, more than half of them agreed that "there are not a lot of good places to play in this neighborhood." One out of five said drugs are a problem. In another national survey of children aged seven to eleven, over half reported that they had been "bothered" by an older person while playing outside.⁴ In no community—city, suburb, town, or country—did a majority say that their neighborhood was "very good."⁵ A kindergarten teacher in Madison, Wisconsin, responding to our recent survey, said, "Many of my children come to school worried about the violent events they've experienced in their neighborhoods."

The growth of suburbia that followed World War II was supposed to be a boon to children, freeing them from the crime and congestion of the city. But suburbs, often planned without sidewalks, isolated children, making it more difficult to walk to school or to a friend's house. Mothers became chauffeurs, hauling their children off to Little League or to the dentist, whizzing right past the neighbors. One suburban mother said, "My nine-year-old has no friends in walking distance so he has to be chauffeured to all his play dates."⁶ Gwendolyn Wright, an urban planning expert, has described recent housing developments as a search for "some middle ground between suburban sprawl and urban high-rise, between isolation in the suburbs and anonymity in the cities."⁷

Townhouses have become popular, with common grounds for recreation—tennis courts, walking paths, pools—spaces in which a sense of neighborhood could grow. But again, the emphasis is on adults, not children. Battery Park City, a huge complex on the southern tip of Manhattan, was conceived as an inspirational setting for its residents. But children were forgotten. There was little play space, and it was difficult to get to a day-care center. Belatedly, a handful of parents pushed for recreational and gardening space to make this "future city" more child-friendly.⁸

It is bad enough when planners ignore children; it is even worse when they exclude them altogether. In Houston, for example, one developer erected a wall to mark the boundary of a child-free ghetto.⁹ According to a nationwide study, an astounding 76

percent of the rental apartments in this country had exclusionary policies with respect to families with children.¹⁰ Moreover, a growing number of planned communities were designed "for adults only." Such restrictions, for the most part, are now illegal; however, hostility toward children persists.

The time has come for America to revive its neighborhoods, to create safe places for play and learning in every community. The simple times are gone when children played games in the streets, yielding voluntarily to a passing "horseless carriage." Yet, surely we can reconstruct our neighborhoods to make them more suitable for children, more welcoming. When new residential and commercial developments are being planned, children's interests must be vigorously represented. Specifically, developers should prepare a "children's impact" statement regarding every major construction project. After all, codes now require developers to meet environmental standards. Why not require "children's standards" too?

What are the standards? At their best, neighborhoods give children opportunities for exploration, places to extend their knowledge of the world—parks and playgrounds for exercise and play. When children were asked how their neighborhoods could be improved, the most frequent response was better places to play.¹¹ When parents were surveyed, 24 percent said that their community did not have suitable facilities for children, and an additional 18 percent described local parks or playgrounds as "not very good" or "not good at all."¹²

Sadly, playgrounds have become parking lots for children—asphalt afterthoughts—built more for the convenience of maintenance workers. They are surfaced with blacktop, surrounded by chain link fences, with play equipment bolted down. After a few slides and swing rides, there is not much left to do. Children often prefer informal spaces, full of wildlife and trees, places where they can hide or climb or find seclusion.¹³ Indeed, when one researcher asked adults to recall their own favorite childhood environments, they most often thought of empty lots, or woods, or even city streets—less often of formal play areas.¹⁴

In contrast, many other countries do use parks creatively for play and learning. The Scandinavian countries have well-supervised "adventure playgrounds," spaces with tree houses, towers to climb, rope swings, ponds for wading, gardens, objects to

collect—perfect places for free play and environmental education. Children work and play independently, planning their own projects, using materials that lie around.¹⁵ Though usually built with older children in mind, even preschoolers can benefit from this sort of play. In Tokyo, the Hanuka Adventure Play Park—a spectacular playground for children—has an enormous mud slope with running water, a wonderfully inviting place where preschoolers spend hours building dams, channels, and mud structures. Ruth Velk, supervisor of an adventure playground in Toronto, said: "When the kids come in here, they don't need language. You just see these sparkling eyes and they transform. We have kids coming in here who are at each other's throats all week, but here they figure out how to cooperate to build something together. There's something magical about it."

In Germany, "youth farms," usually designed for older children, feature a wide variety of activities—playing music, fire-building, rearing livestock, horseback riding. Something called the "urban farm" is particularly successful in Great Britain. Here the emphasis is on community gardening for all age groups, but children do more than pull weeds. They help plan the garden space, making it their own.¹⁶

Here at home, artists in North Philadelphia turned a vacant inner-city lot into a community art park called "The Village of Arts and Humanities." In the Village, children as young as three create sculptures and murals, and, according to artist Lily Yeh, "The Village" stirred a new sense of community in the neighborhood. The city of Evanston, Illinois, over the years purchased property within its restricted boundaries to create play spaces for young children. Some land parcels were very small, no more than one-half or one-quarter of an acre. The result: a network of "Tot Lots" spread across the city.¹⁷

When playgrounds designed by Robert Leathers & Associates of Ithaca, New York are built they engage an entire neighborhood. Parents and children meet with designers, suggesting ideas about what play structures they would like. The "Leathers" playgrounds are one-of-a-kind, and are designed to stimulate a child's imagination, muscle development, and motor skills. Frequently, the playground includes rockets, trampolines, bridges, towers, slides, crawl spaces, and structures for handicapped kids. Recently, citizens in Rockford, Illinois, put together their own outdoor hands-on science park with a cave, suspension bridges, echo machines, a weather station, and "whisper dishes" that let children communicate over a four-hundred-foot distance.

In Kingston, New York, Kimberly Kross, a mother of three "very active boys," said she found no developed play areas in her city's parks for young children. She volunteered at a Leathers project in a nearby community and then initiated the building of a new playground in her hometown. "Kinderland" was the result of her efforts. It includes a castle, tree fort, mirror maze, trolley rides, and swings. At the center of the playground is an amphitheater where parents can survey the activities of their children and chat with other parents who are doing the same. A tot sandbox has a slide that deposits children right into the middle of the sandpile. A tall "Dinobumpy" slide is a favorite, along with the balance beams, rings, and climbing areas.

Kinderland attracts seventy-five to one hundred preschoolers per day and a smaller number of older children when school lets out. One mother drives thirty-five miles so that her child can play there. More than six hundred "Leathers" playgrounds have been built throughout the country. But again, the emphasis is not on grinding out more playgrounds, but on grass-roots planning, with children and community members working alongside the professionals.

In reclaiming neighborhoods for children—making them neighborhoods for learning—indoor spaces such as unused commercial centers and warehouses should not be overlooked. Consider, for example, that in 1991, 22 percent of the commercial space in this country stood vacant. Manhattan alone has more than fifty million square feet of empty space.¹⁸ Couldn't some of the covered space be converted into a network of "indoor parks," scattered in neighborhoods around the city?

In downtown Raleigh, North Carolina, a former commercial building has become an indoor park with places to climb and "activity zones" for imaginary play. There is a child-size grocery store, a hospital emergency room, and a big sandpile. The indoor play space is exclusively for youngsters up to age seven—a place where, for a small fee, children and parents can come for fun and learning. Youngsters learn to be considerate, helping to clean up before leaving. The mother of one preschooler described Raleigh's indoor park as "wonderful for my three-year-old daughter who is handicapped. The play area has a series of 'mills' and 'falls' and Janet just loves being there!" Robin Moore, one of the designers, has proposed that similar "Safe Havens" be built throughout the country. Indeed, why not challenge students in architecture schools to design creative "indoor parks" for our children as a senior-year project?

New indoor recreation centers also might be built. Evendale, Ohio, for example, has an indoor center for all ages, with pool and table tennis and video games, a sand volleyball court, rooms for toddlers with child-sized wash basins and drinking fountains. A playground for preschoolers includes a "tricycle track."¹⁹ Again, the physical development of children—a healthy start—is so much a part of school readiness. Spaces and places for creative play are needed if the first education goal is to be successful.

In all cities the tops of buildings also offer a huge amount of unused space, another possibility for children. In Tokyo, where space is at such a premium, high-rise department stores have rooftop playgrounds for their customers. The Hermann Hospital in Houston, Texas, has a rooftop playground for pediatric patients. Rooftops, when carefully designed, may offer children more sun, less carbon monoxide, more safety. Why not build a network of "playgrounds in the sky" in every city?

Recently, the Lyceum Kennedy, a private school in New York City, built a playground atop a ninety-nine-year-old building in the very heart of Manhattan. At first, nearby workers whose offices overlooked the playground worried that laughter and noisy chatter would disturb them. As it turned out, the sounds were soothing and "undistracting," said one nearby worker. "We noticed, only this morning, [they] have a way of scurrying up the wall, tapping on the window, settling in right next to you."²⁰

Putting it all together, we strongly recommend that every community, as a high priority, develop a "master plan for play," identifying all of the possible spaces and places for playing—neighborhood by neighborhood—building new networks of outdoor and indoor parks, and refurbishing old ones to provide every child opportunities for exercise and exploration.

With a dash of imaginative planning—and lots of courage—every city also might create a network of "street parks" in densely populated neighborhoods. But for this to happen, we must become at least as concerned about kids as we are about cars. There was a day when streets were used before playgrounds, and were great places for stickball, and even for sledding in the winter. A kind of standoff existed between child play and machines. Children would reluctantly move aside when the carriage, then the car, came along.

But with the explosion of traffic, not only street play, but life itself was threatened. Between 1910 and 1913, when children still ran free in the street, over 40 percent of New York City traffic victims were under fifteen. By 1914, the proportion grew to 60 percent—and most of the accidents took place just a block or two from the victim's home.²¹ In response, "Save the Children's Lives" committees sprang up. Rallies were held. Reformers campaigned for child safety laws. Street games were outlawed, playgrounds constructed, and children were arrested for playing in the street, or even for "making noise."²² By 1930, the number of child deaths from street accidents had dramatically declined, but so had the play possibilities for New York children.^{23 24}

No one imagines that we can have streets on every street. Still, is it unreasonable to suggest that, even in our busiest cities, streets could selectively be closed off—creating instant street-parks, with good lighting and supervision? The Dutch have in fact cut off many through-streets, turning them into cul-de-sacs called *woonerven*. In these protective spaces, intimate neighborhoods have formed and children play in safety. Small gardens and trees have been planted. Local residents once again feel safe and comfortable in the streets.²⁵ We urge that "street playgrounds" be established in urban areas to make open spaces for creative play and learning immediately available to children.

On a more modest scale, streets might be cordoned off temporarily, for a week or two in the summer, to make them safe for play. For years, the New York City Police Athletic League has created such street parks in the summer. In 1988, for example, one hundred and ten blocks were closed off, creating "instant playgrounds." Fire hydrants were opened, spouting cascades of cool water. Children frolicked and recreation staff joined in playful games. Even swimming pools on flatbed trucks were wheeled in. Again, couldn't all cities close off even a few streets several weeks each year for the children?

Children need safe streets and better parks. But the neighborhood for every child should be a classroom, with learning stations on every corner. Parents should introduce the child to every possibility for play and education. Museums, zoos, and libraries are, for example, at the very heart of a school readiness program. As the director of the Brooklyn Public Library put it, libraries are places "where wonders can be unlocked and new worlds explored."²⁶ In the small village of Rocky Hill, New Jersey,

like some other communities, the library has become a lively children's center with storytelling time, children's films, and crafts activities. It is a place where families come together.

Just down the road, in Princeton, New Jersey, the public library has a school readiness program for preschoolers on the verge of entering kindergarten. The library has a recommended reading series that includes *Will I Have a Friend?*, by Miriam Cohen, which follows a young boy named Jim through his first day at school, when everyone else except him seems to have found a friend. *Willie Bear*, by Mildred Kantro Witz, describes a child preparing for the first day of school and leaving his stuffed animals behind. *What I Hear in My School*, by June Behrens, traces the origin of sounds heard during a school day in the classrooms and on the playground. This reading for kindergarten is wonderfully helpful to both preschoolers and their parents.

Museums can be great learning centers, too. There are, in fact, more than four hundred children's museums around the country, all developed since the 1970s and all devoted entirely to exhibitions and programs for youngsters.²⁷ San Francisco's Exploratorium, for example, is a hands-on science museum. The Cleveland Children's Museum sets aside Tuesday mornings specifically for preschoolers so that the younger children can walk around, look at the exhibits, and manipulate the demonstrations at their own pace. Boston's Children's Museum is truly a learning center with lots of hands-on exhibits, including one called "Playspace." The museum also conducts workshops on self-esteem and what to expect in school. We urge that every library, museum, and zoo establish a School Readiness Program and that municipal authorities give top priority to the funding of such programs.

Other centers serving the general public can also feature children's programs. The Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, has what it calls "bag tours"—canvas bags filled with art materials, books, and a folder describing objects in the museum's collection, which are given to preschool teachers and homeschoolers. The goal is to stimulate young children's creativity in the arts. The "Family Express" program of the Cleveland Museum of Art involves preschoolers in art with their parents. Once a month the parents and children create cut-paper carpets, ceramics, or ink paintings.

In Pittsburgh, a unique institution called simply "The Carnegie" has an education department with classes for preschoolers. Children as young as two-and-a-half or

three, accompanied by their parents, can enroll in an "Art Express" class or in the natural history museum's "Touch and Tell" program. Beginning at age four, youngsters can enroll in science classes which feature computer experience, hands-on science projects, and math puzzles.

Ironically, at the very time libraries are *most* needed, when libraries, museums, and galleries have such a special role to play as "ready-to-learn" centers, budgets are being slashed, hours restricted, and bookmobile services cut back. In Massachusetts, for example, twenty branch libraries have been closed, and 30 percent of the remaining libraries have substantially reduced their hours.²⁸ In the town of Gray, Maine, the public library cut services from forty to sixteen hours a week and is only open two days a week. Children's story hours have vanished.²⁹ We strongly recommend that the budgets of these ready-to-learn centers be generously supported by communities with special funding for preschool programs.

While parks and recreational programs and even libraries and museums have fallen on hard times, many parents have neglected to support and use such resources. A recent survey of the American family by the U.S. Department of Education revealed that only about one-third of today's parents take their children to the library (table 17). Even for college graduates the percentage is only 53 percent. Equally disturbing, only about one in five parents say they visit an art gallery, museum, or historical site with their children. Little wonder that so many children are unprepared for school.

TABLE 17
Three- to Five-Year-Olds Whose Parents
Take Them on Cultural Outings Frequently, 1991

	<u>Visit a Library</u>	<u>Visit an Art Gallery, Museum, or Historical Site</u>
All parents	35%	22%
Less than high school education	18	18
High school graduate or some college education	30	19
College graduate	53	31

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics.³⁰

Schools also can serve as "Ready-to-Learn Centers" by offering "after-hours" programs for preschoolers or by converting some hard-surface playgrounds into inviting gardens. At the Ossington-Old Orchard School in Toronto parents convinced school officials to tear up the asphalt playground and plant trees, flowers, and vegetables in the space. Today the children's play space includes an aviary that attracts wild birds and a hillside that replicates a native Canadian forest. Every summer morning, preschool children go into a vegetable garden and harvest food, sometimes for their own lunches. It's a place where people of all ages come together. For example, senior citizens come to help youngsters with their gardening and even school kids can work with three- and four-year-olds, teaching them and helping them pick peas and catch tomato bugs.

The shopping mall has become the modern-day equivalent of a village green. It is the place where families gather to browse. But what does a child learn in malls? The escalators, fast-food emporiums, pet shops, or card stores, and noisy "video game centers" offer little of value to very young children. We therefore recommend that every major shopping mall include a "Ready-to-Learn Center" an inviting, creative space

where young children can engage in educative play. What we imagine is a "learning zone" filled with toys, books, jungle gyms, big building blocks, and educational videos.

The Sutter Square Galleria in downtown Sacramento, California has such a center called a "Visionarium," that includes a variety of exhibits where children can learn, guided by staff. Children can create "bubble structures" with lots of shapes and patterns, for example, or use raceways and golf balls on inclined surfaces to explore the laws of motion. A "light and color" display uses mirrors, prisms, flashlights, and streetlights. "Safety Pals" tells youngsters about helpers in their community—police officers, firefighters, and mail carriers. A "Watch Me Grow" center, built especially for children under three, has a castle, a slide, climbing bars, dress-up clothes, and instead of sand, a "cornmeal" box for creative play. The Visionarium also has a nursing station and a movie section where children create their own animated cartoons.

McDonald's Corporation, the fast-food chain, has opened its first indoor, pay-to-play playground in Naperville, Illinois. Designed for children from infancy to age twelve, "Leaps & Bounds" is billed as a "family playcenter." "Children love to play," said Dr. James Rippe, a cardiologist at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and a specialist on health and fitness who assisted in the development of the McDonald's Center. "Childhood play serves a number of purposes. It should be fun, and in the process contribute to the development of their motor, muscular, and cardiovascular fitness. Play time is also a learning time and a great way for parents to communicate and learn with their children, an added important benefit."

Upon entering the eleven-thousand-square-foot play center, parents and children take off their shoes and check them in to a "Sneaker Keeper." They then turn to over forty different play possibilities—"turbo slides," crawl tunnels, five hundred feet of mazes and tubing suspended from the ceiling, and twenty-five thousand colorful plastic balls. A "Ladder Pull" has been designed to enhance muscular strength and endurance, a "Rope Walk" to develop balancing skills along with eye/foot coordination. In a "Turtle Shell," young children learn the concepts of "in and out," "over and around," and "how big. . . ." Activities are organized by age. "It is designed as 'play with purpose,' " said Terry Capatosto at McDonald's. "In the course of what is designed as free play, the activities are actually meant to develop the child's physical and social skills. And it encourages families to play together. Parents tell us nowhere else can they play *with* their children. At most playgrounds they stand back and watch."

A Minneapolis "educational mall," scheduled to open in 1992, will include a preschool program or child-care center, an aquarium, and perhaps a miniature golf course area. Children will attend classes while their parents work.³¹ Discovery Zone, a new national franchise, is building indoor playgrounds in malls with brightly colored "ball baths," human-sized gerbil tunnels, unusual slides, bouncy water beds, moonwalks, a mini-racetrack, and an obstacle course. Children pay for one, two, or three hours of play, on a sliding scale.³² Dick Guggenheimer, owner of Discovery Zone in Yonkers, New York, told us: "We're indoors, we're padded; parents can feel their child is safe."

Looking around the neighborhood, almost every store or public space is, potentially, a ready-to-learn center. Why not open up the stores and shops and banks and airports to children, showing them what goes on inside, making them feel welcome? The Danes, for example, have created children's spaces in banks, with child-sized furniture and toys. In Japan, banks hire employees to greet customers and make children feel welcome, giving them books to read while parents do their banking. The Pittsburgh, Denver, San Jose, and Boston airports now have play spaces, and the Raleigh-Durham airport will soon construct a playspace with an air-flight theme, complete with a cockpit for kids to board.

Children in America today know all about consuming; they are constantly urging their parents to buy things they see in hard-sell commercials. But they're not learning about how the various things bought are produced, or what work is all about. They see their parents go off in the morning and come home at night. But what in the world do grownups actually do? On a Chicago street, violin makers work facing their storefront window so everyone—including neighborhood children—can watch them at work. Children frequently stop by to see the masters practice their craft. Why couldn't almost every kind of store—bakeries, art supply houses, print shops, supermarkets—have an "open window" on its work, offering a special ready-to-learn tour for preschoolers?

The Grand Union food chain does just that. It has "learning tours" for children, occasions when managers of various departments tell where foods come from, describe how they are processed and packaged, answer questions, and offer samples. On these excursions, children may watch fresh orange juice being squeezed and have a taste. They get to use a label gun, operate the checkout scanners, and learn about the store's recycling program. They go behind the scenes, learn about the coolers, and see loading docks. Ed Tucker, manager of Grand Union's flagship store in New York, put it simply: "The tours are good for the kids and good for Grand Union, too."



To further promote children and learning, all the "Ready-to-Learn Centers" in a neighborhood—from libraries to shopping malls—should be well marked, perhaps with a community logo signifying a "child-friendly place." Parents driving down the street and seeing such a logo would know that the community cares deeply about children. Further, in their newspaper advertisements, businesses could display Ready-to-Learn logos to signal that parents and children are welcome. Television stations could use the Ready-to-Learn logo to signify programs for young children.

Every community might also prepare a "Ready-to-Learn Directory" to help parents locate businesses with special children's services and programs for preschoolers at libraries, parks, and shopping malls. Newspapers could run weekly "Ready-to-Learn Supplements" and feature stories about children's programs. *The Journal-Gazette* in Fort Wayne, Indiana, for example, has a regular section called "Living for Kids." The Tuesday, August 13, 1991, edition was headlined, "Have Fun Visiting the Place Where Art Lives," which told parents about children's programs at local galleries and museums.

What we imagine, then, are neighborhoods with literally dozens of well-marked, child-friendly spaces and places for learning. The entire community would become a classroom. But for this to work well, people will be needed to teach the children. In Denmark and Sweden, a corps of respected professionals called "social teachers" work with children in housing co-ops, adventure playgrounds, parks, and afterschool centers on projects that range from tree planting to theatre productions. In São Paulo, Brazil, the city's children's bureau recently launched one of the biggest children's campaigns in the world. Animators, actors, singers, and dancers, some paid twice as much as teachers, are sent out into the neighborhoods of São Paulo, including the worst slums, in an effort to bring the performing arts to children—and to draw children from the margins into the center of the nation's life.

We propose that literally hundreds of thousands of high school and college students be recruited as volunteers in a national campaign. They could spend several hours every week as members of a Ready-to-Learn Service Corps. Their activities might include reading to children in a library, taking them on a tour of the local bakery, volunteering

at a school readiness center at the mall, or serving as recreation leaders at a local park. Every school and college in the community could sponsor a Ready-to-Learn Service program as part of its graduation requirement, staffing projects in the neighborhood surrounding the institution. Further, the proposed Service Corps could be linked to the National Community Service Act of 1990, which supports community service and learning programs in schools and colleges. A "Youth Service Corps" should be organized in every community to make it possible for school and college students to serve as volunteers in children's Ready-to-Learn Centers and Programs.

Last year at Michigan State University, student residence halls sponsored Halloween programs for preschoolers, and the College of Agriculture sponsored an Animal Day. Princeton University students work with preschoolers through the Young Mother Outreach Program, in which female students are "big sisters" to teenage mothers and their babies at the Union Industrial Home for Children in nearby Trenton, New Jersey. Texas Woman's University converted a student residence hall into apartments for single mothers and their children. While the mothers are working and going to classes, their young children are cared for by college students.

Kids on Campus, a summer enrichment program run by a nonprofit organization in Sacramento, rents facilities at California State University. Once a week, two hundred children, from kindergarten to grade nine, come to Kids on Campus to take classes in improvisational theatre, karate, or computer science. Among the staff are students from the college and also local high school students, who volunteer for one year and are fully paid for subsequent years of service.

Program director Andee Dawson emphasizes that it is not only the children who benefit. "It's a great opportunity in many ways," she said. "The campus facilities are hardly used during the summer so it's the perfect spot for kids to come. It also helps the university open its doors to the outside community and improves a college's image, transforming it from a formidable institution into a friendly neighborhood place for learning. Kids and parents get to know their way around and see what the place is like. It gets children used to the idea of going to a college at a very early age."³³

If every child is to come to school ready to learn, we need neighborhoods for learning, spaces and places in every city, town, and village that offer children rich opportunities for learning and creative play. Fred Rogers of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" put the challenge this way: "Everything we do . . . [must be] done to encourage children to feel

good about who they are, to help them understand themselves and their world, to enhance their healthy curiosity about that world, and to support in them an optimistic striving toward what they can become."³⁴

NOTES

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The Seventh Step

CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

"The continuity of all cultures depends on the living presence of at least three generations," anthropologist Margaret Mead wrote.¹ Older people can be inspired by the innocence and hopefulness of youth, while children, through close and cordial interaction with other generations, can discover their roots and then gain confidence to make their way through life. Preschoolers, in particular, need such connections to extend knowledge, deepen social confidence, enrich language skills, and stir their sense of right and wrong—in short, to strengthen their readiness to learn.

A child's learning can be enormously enriched by connections across the generations. They give children emotional security and social competence, which are critical to learning. Therefore, we propose, in this chapter, that day-care centers and retirement villages integrate their programs. We urge that the "Grandteacher" program, which brings older people into schools as tutors, be expanded. We urge, as well, that libraries and churches sponsor intergenerational projects and that communities sponsor "Granddays" to bring the old and young together.

The movie "Avalon," which traces the lives of a Baltimore immigrant family for three generations, features a touching relationship between a grandfather and grandson. Grandson Michael was someone grandfather could tell his stories to, passing on his wisdom, sharing his memories. Grandfather, on the other hand, became Michael's very special friend, someone in whom he could confide. In the intimacy of this bond, the boy was learning and stretching, while Grandfather was sharing and teaching—passing on traditions across generations.

In America today, such closely-knit interdependent relationships are fast fading. John Gato, recently New York City's Teacher of the Year, vividly described the alienation in our culture. "We live in a time of great social crisis," he said. "We seem to have lost our identity. Children and old people are penned up and locked away from the business of the world to a degree without precedent; nobody talks to them anymore. Without children and old people mixing in daily life, a community has no future and no past.

only a continuous present. In fact, the word *community* hardly applies to the way we interact with each other."²

Today's loss of community affects everyone, but it is most damaging to children. Several years ago a Carnegie Foundation survey of school children revealed that 30 percent of fifth-graders and 42 percent of eighth-graders go home every afternoon to an empty house. More than 40 percent, on average, would like to spend more time with a mother or father, and nearly one-third would like to spend more time with grandparents (table 18). "I'm always alone," a young student told us. "I don't have any sisters or brothers, and my parents always go out with their own friends and leave me by myself. And at home, there's nothing to do. I feel really lonely." What about older people in their neighborhoods? "We just never meet," said one youngster. "They sort of live in a separate world."

TABLE 18

Family Issues of Concern to Students
(Percent agreeing)

	<u>Fifth Graders</u>	<u>Eighth Graders</u>
I would like to spend more time with my mother	59%	35%
I would like to spend more time with my father	54	33
I would like to spend more time with my grandparents	39	23
When I come home from school, there is usually an adult there to meet me	70	58

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. 1988 Survey of Fifth and Eighth Grade Students.

Psychiatrist James Comer suggests that much of the trouble we attribute to the mental and social problems of our young really stems from a lack of generational connections. When he was growing up, Comer says, "There was a conspiracy of protection for a child." In this supportive climate "there was a fair amount of trust and respect among the authority figures," he said. "And children knew what to expect. Everyone had a real sense of place and belonging. Even if you didn't have a high status, you really had a sense of community. Everything a child knew about—what was right and wrong, good and bad—came to him or her through those adult authority figures. Now we may not think of that as so desirable; on the other hand, those young people felt supported by the adults who could sanction or not sanction behavior."³ Today, profound changes mark family roles and relationships, obliterating the "conspiracy of protection" for our children. They suffer as a result.

"It is a modern paradox that children are far more likely to have living grandparents but much less likely to know them well," says Fran Pratt of the Center for Understanding the Aging at Framingham State College in Massachusetts.⁴ In such a climate too many young people seem adrift, without a steady moral compass to direct their daily behavior or to plot a thoughtful and responsible course for their lives.⁵ The National Commission on Children reported the ramifications of such changes: Disintegrating family ties, increased mobility, and the lack of intergenerational connections in families and in neighborhoods have amounted to a "conspiracy of neglect" for our children putting them at risk socially, emotionally, and intellectually by depriving them of the vital bonds and attachments that support their growth and development.⁶

Teachers responding to our survey spoke frequently of the emotional isolation of children who feel alienated, unattached, and find it difficult to learn.⁷ "Children are growing up alone," one kindergarten teacher wrote, "and I really think it's sad that they never seem to be with older people. They don't know how adults think or what they do. I'm convinced it affects their learning." Another said: "Children are coming to school with so much confusion about whom to trust. They need continuity and a sense of belonging, and I'd like to see more extended families take responsibility for educating their youth."

Learning-readiness in the fullest sense benefits from connections across the generations to give children a sense of the past and a vision of the future. An older person can offer children stories from their past, rich experiences filled with lessons of life. More importantly, intergenerational connections give the child a sense of continuity, security,

and a feeling of belonging. Research summarized by the Education Commission of the States notes: ". . . children who come to school capable of trust, initiative, . . . and with a sense of control and purpose to their lives, are far more ready and able to learn than students who lack these "psychological basics."

Connections across the generations begin at home, and the living pattern of every family affects a child profoundly. Family life seems so vulnerable these days. Relatives are scattered. Everyone is too busy. Nevertheless, we all need roots, and children, especially, hunger for such contact.

In the late nineteenth century, as waves of immigrants were moving into America's cities, something called "the family circle" brought relatives together to share experiences and discuss everyday family problems.⁸ Older people talked, children played, all connected by a thread of kinship. Family-circle pressure could be oppressive and relationships were not always harmonious. Still, the larger extended family had a way of breaking tension, of giving encouragement and support to children, and at the same time strengthening family bonds.

Imagining such family circles today may be far too romantic. But surely loyalties and friendships still can be reinforced by ceremonies and celebrations that bring relatives together. Several years ago, the National Council of Negro Women began hosting family reunions in big-city parks across the country. People came. Whole families gathered to picnic, share food, swap stories, talk about old times, and strengthen family ties. Over the past five years, *four million* people have gathered for these reunions.⁹ Other young families living in cities distant from their own relatives have formed networks with adopted grandparents, meeting regularly, exchanging gifts and strengthening connections across the generations.

Former surgeon general C. Everett Koop, recalling his childhood in Brooklyn, described just how enriching and intimate intergenerational relationships can be: "Like many youngsters in those days, it was my privilege to grow up in a three-generation world. I am saddened to read that today only 9 percent of children in the United States live within walking distance of their grandparents. . . . As a child, I reveled in being surrounded by a large family. Five backyards down Fifteenth Street, I could see the house of my maternal grandfather, Grandpa Apel, . . . (who) taught me the special responsibility and pleasure of being generous, not only with money, but also with time. We talked constantly. I knew everything about his German childhood," Koop recalled.

"I lived and relived his becalmed six-week crossing of the Atlantic on a sailing vessel so that I could almost feel the hunger pangs from two weeks without food. . . . Most important, I saw things and people through his eyes."¹⁰

Beyond strengthening family ties, the very structure of our modern institutions must be candidly reexamined. In today's socially fragmented climate, we have actually *institutionalized* the age segregation. Today, infants are in homes or centers. Toddlers are in day care, older children are in school, young adults go off to college, parents are in the workplace and older people are in retirement villages, nursing homes, or apartments, living all alone. What we are left with is a "horizontal culture," one in which each age group is almost wholly disconnected from the others, separated so completely that it is possible, quite literally, to go through life—from birth to death—and spend most waking hours interacting primarily with one's peers. Generations exist side by side, brushing elbows, yet hardly touching one another; rarely developing friendships.

More than sixty years ago, John Dewey said: "Whatever the future may have in store, one thing is certain. Unless local *communal* life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself."¹¹ The time has come to break up the age ghettos, creating new intergenerational institutions, that are arranged "vertically" across organizations, so that the old and the young can come together naturally. In Switzerland, for example, day-care centers and homes for the elderly are physically adjacent, sharing facilities, combining programs.¹² This integrated community represents precisely the direction we should be going.

Both age groups can benefit. When senior citizens helped in child-care programs in three cities—Memphis, San Francisco and Pittsburgh—teachers reported that children were more motivated to learn and more cooperative as a result of the experience.¹³ Seniors benefitted, too. The older child-care workers in the study found that their activities offered them greater opportunities to learn, to use their skills and knowledge, build confidence, pursue meaningful tasks and find love, respect, and friendship.¹⁴ It is what psychologist Erik Erikson refers to as "generativity"—involvement in the well-being and nurturing of the next generation.¹⁵ Generativity, as Erikson explains it, means, of course, being a good parent, but it also means being concerned about the coming generation in a larger, more communal sense. Adults who are not concerned about the next generation stagnate, lose hope.

It doesn't have to be that way. There are alternatives. Generations United, a Washington-based coalition, now represents more than one hundred national organizations involved in promoting intergenerational programs and issues nationwide. It is currently conducting a survey of intergenerational child-care programs and to date has located one thousand such centers that link young and old.

Messiah Village in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, atop one of the rolling hills near Harrisburg, is one place that has for years brought the old and young together. It is a retirement community with five hundred residents in cottages, apartments, and single rooms. But tucked beneath the chapel in the main building is a Children's Family Center where one hundred eighty-five youngsters, ages two to five, arrive each day for child care. Breakfast is prepared by one of the village residents, known as "Grandma." Other retirees organize games, strawberry festivals, and art classes. They tell stories and help with meals, snacks, and song time.

At the village, children walk through the halls almost every day, greeting residents, occasionally joining them in crafts or cooking classes, in exercise sessions, or on strolls along nature trails. The generations also meet for picnics and holiday celebrations. A "Special Friends" program matches a child with a retiree.¹⁶ Special Friends meet weekly to play games, work puzzles, read, and talk. In such encounters, children learn about growing older, while older people are inspired by the sincerity, freshness, and energy of children. Director Sue Shupp observed, "From my point of view, it can be nothing but good to get the generations back together."

"On Lok" is a nonprofit medical and social service organization in San Francisco, with a Generations Care Center that serves both senior citizens and young children. The twenty-four two- to five-year-olds enrolled interact with seniors in exercise programs, holiday celebrations, and special events. Buildings which house the two groups are connected by hallways, and employees can drop by during lunch and snack breaks to join the children.¹⁷ We conclude that all schools, day-care centers, and retirement villages should find ways to redesign their programs in order to bring the young and old together, building bridges across the generations.

Sally Newman, director of "Generations Together" at the University of Pittsburgh, notes that senior citizens can be especially helpful in the growing child-care field.¹⁸ A University of Pittsburgh study revealed, for example, that 60 percent of mothers enrolling their infants and preschoolers in day care want mature child-care providers.¹⁹

And, as one kindergarten teacher suggested, "Many of us are so busy that there's no time to just visit with the children—or just *listen*. It would be great to have a spare grandma or grandpa. They could listen to the children's concerns, and even share their dreams."²⁰

The good news is that such connections are already taking place. Consider, for example that 25 percent of the workers in family day care, 13 percent of the staff in child-care centers, and 7 percent of preschool teachers are "seniors," over the age of 55.²¹ And their participation makes a difference. We recommend that a "Grandteacher Program" be created in communities across the country, through which older people can participate as mentors in day-care, preschools, and home service programs.

The Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University in Philadelphia brings the old and young together. In one program, called ECHO, (Elders and Children Helping Each Other), retirees are given tips on how to care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in child-care centers. Program director Nancy Henkin says that such training gives elders "the confidence to realize they can make a difference in the lives of children, and offers children models." One elder participant, who does not have a family of her own nearby, works at a child-care center at the local Naval Yard. She is in charge of crafts, which, she says, "has given me an exciting new interest."²²

At Point Park Children's School in Pittsburgh a group of a dozen trained senior citizens work as part of the regular staff in a children's center that includes infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Director Betty Lisowski told us, "Lots of the kids have no grandparents, and these older figures in their lives provide for a much richer life for the children, things you can't learn from a book. It's sort of like folklore, different life experiences passed along, even for these youngest children." She is quick to praise the one hundred hours of training these "olders" have received and emphasizes the benefits for the younger staff as well. "Lots of child-care workers are extremely young themselves—right out of school," she said. "It's good for them to see the strong work ethic of this generation where work is taken much more seriously. The olders are extremely reliable and won't use physical disabilities or doctor's appointments as excuses to stay home. It's good for a young staff to have that kind of ethical code as a model."

In San Francisco thirty-five children, ages two to six, are cared for from sunup to sundown at the Sunshine Garden School. The older people in this project were given

special training for their roles, and receive modest stipends. At the University of North Carolina's Senior Academy for Intergenerational Learning in Asheville, retirees teach children in the preschools. One participant noted, "You don't see many people around here looking for something to do." One of the most inspired national efforts is the Foster Grandparent Program sponsored by the federally-funded program Action, in which low-income seniors become companions to children who have special needs due to handicaps, abuse, neglect, or even brushes with the law. Foster Grandparents are paid a modest stipend. Clarence Young of Louisville, Kentucky, was asked to work with cerebral palsy youngsters. "It was," he said, "wonderfully satisfactory to help these children and watch them learn to do things for themselves that they were not formerly able to do."

Typically, Foster Grandparents work several hours with two children a day, in a child's home, in a hospital, or in another institution in which a child may be living. They often become "real" grandparents, heaping love and attention and knowledge on the children. They visit with them, talk with them, and come to care about them very deeply. In New York City, Foster Grandparents also teach parenting and homemaking skills to young mothers.²³ "With so many older Americans yearning to give, with hundreds of thousands of children aching for just a touch of love, what could be more logical?" an Action official asks. "The Foster Grandparent Program is a chance for old and young Americans to answer each other's needs and to get to know each other."

Intergenerational projects can be used to enrich almost every service institution. The Los Angeles Public Library, for example, has a "Grandparents and Books" project in thirty of its branches.²⁴ Currently, two hundred senior volunteers come to the local libraries to read to children and provide a "grandlap." Each volunteer makes a six-month commitment of at least two hours a week. In a Hispanic neighborhood, where the program was pioneered, one of the first "grandparents" is still reading to young children after three years.

Churches, synagogues, and mosques also have a magnificent opportunity to sponsor other programs to bring the old and young together. Traditionally, religious worship has been an integrated activity, an occasion when all family members join in a shared experience. Recently, however, religious programs have become age-segregated, too. Toddlers, singles, teenagers, retirees all gather in the same building, but rarely meet.

Age grouping sometimes makes sense, but religious ceremonies and celebrations surely have a communal function that should bring the young and old together, strengthen families, and give a larger sense of purpose to all generations—especially to children.

The "Hearts and Hands" program at the First United Methodist Church in Topeka, Kansas, involves older people with young children. They may come to the day-care center to sit with the two- to five-year-olds as they nap, so that regular caregivers can conduct staff meetings. Other seniors make doll clothes, do grocery shopping, and build playground equipment and storage sheds for toys. Several volunteers constructed a stage at the center for the children's plays. Occasionally, entire families participate in the monthly birthday celebrations, singing, playing games, enjoying each other's company. The center also brings in an elderly person, confined to a wheelchair, to read to the children, tell stories, and answer questions. Teacher Kathie Price told us, "We didn't know how the kids would react to a disabled person, but they took to her immediately. Kids have a lot less trouble accepting older people than the rest of us."

The Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, Maryland, has a pen-pal program with a nearby Jewish Retirement Community, Revitz House. Students are paired with retirees and write letters to them on a regular basis throughout the school year. The children describe their work and themselves, and ask their correspondents to do the same. One elderly woman wrote back this simple statement: "When I was a girl I had brown hair like you, but now my hair has turned gray," capturing perfectly the intergenerational message: we may seem different, but actually have so much in common. Children also make visits to the center to meet their pen pals, and parents of the children often accompany them on their trips. Singing and holiday celebrations are shared and contact occasionally is sustained as the children grow older. Teacher Susan Bonnett, who instituted the program, integrates the rest of the curriculum around an intergenerational theme, with books like *Mandy's grandmother* by Liesel Moak Skorpen²⁵ or *Kev'n's grandma* by Barbara Williams,²⁶ and others selected from a list provided by the library.

Day-care centers at the workplace also can strengthen intergenerational connections. In 1990, for example, the Stride Rite Corporation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, became the first private company in the country to establish such a facility.²⁷ It created a program in which preschoolers are joined by retirees; they engage in creative play—painting murals, baking cookies, reading stories, dancing, and singing. Arnold Hiatt, chairman of Stride Rite, states, "I began thinking about the enormous waste of

energy that was building among the retired community, people who didn't have anywhere to channel their energy. I was aware of the opportunities that children provide as a focus. . . . It seemed to me that these two groups had something to give each other."²⁸

Older citizens can help children in the afternoon, filling in the gap between the end of preschool and the end of the workday. Right now, many parents are frustrated because no service is available. They cannot leave work and there is no one at home or in the neighborhood to call on for help. An "After-Hours" center could be set up in a child-care facility, a local elementary school, a church, or a community center. Some retirees might teach crafts, read stories—or just provide laptime for a child who needs such nurturing. Volunteers might work several days a week, or possibly one week of every month.

"AgeLink", a program run by Western Carolina University, offers after-hours services to young children and their families. Many retirees have been drawn to the region—a reservoir of talent, waiting to be tapped. Six hundred children, many from single-parent homes, and one hundred retirees participate in the program. Some retirees assist in the homes of licensed care providers. Others help care for five or six children after school, taking them on trips in the afternoon or becoming a child's "phone friend." We propose that child-care centers establish an "After-Hours" program, one in which older volunteers would care for the children from the time preschool ends until parents can pick them up.

"Generations Together," a program in Pittsburgh, promotes intergenerational projects and sponsors a "Tele-Friend" project that matches older volunteers with a latchkey child. The two stay in touch by telephone, talking about happy events and sharing disappointments. The retiree becomes a friend of the child and also helps if there is a divorce or other loss in the child's family. Director Sally Newman observes, "By bringing the old and young together, children will be more creative, and better able to make positive life decisions, and be better learners, too. The elderly will be more secure, less vulnerable, and better able to leave a legacy."

"Connections Across the Generations" could become a theme around which an entire community might rally. Churches or service clubs, for example, could sponsor "Grand

Picnics" in which older people and preschool children come together. Merchants could sponsor "Grand Shopping Trips," giving discounts to intergenerational teams. Travel agents could plan "Grand Travel," catering to grandparents and grandchildren traveling together. "Grandtravel" is, in fact, the name of a Chevy Chase, Maryland, tour company that creates domestic and international itineraries to "expand the world of grandparent/grandchildren relationships."²⁰

On a more modest scale, a local tourist bureau could plan "Grand Saturdays" or "Grand Weekends," a time when older and younger people would take short trips together visiting local sites. On "Grandparent Days" school districts invite grandparents, both real or adopted, to the school to share activities and a meal. We recommend that every community organize a series of intergenerational projects—perhaps called "Grand Days"—in which senior citizens engage in activities and excursions with young children. The possibilities are almost endless and so are the benefits to children.

One Grandparents Day of sorts has taken place in Dobbs Ferry, New York. Ray Gerson, superintendent of schools, said, "We feel the seniors are part of the community and that the schools are theirs."²⁰ In nearby Yorktown, a consortium of community groups developed a project called "Roots" in which children interview their grandparents or seniors at local centers about their lives. Louise Corwin started the activity because she saw a gap in the lives of young children. "I grew up in a small community in Pennsylvania," she said. "There was more cohesion there than I see in some of the communities here. I could go after school and visit both sets of grandparents."²¹

The National Council on Aging makes connections across *three* generations in a program called "Family Friends." A senior citizen participating in the program becomes a "grandparent" to a child and "parent" to the mother and father. Each volunteer makes a nine-month commitment to visit his or her adopted family at least once a week, while receiving a small stipend to cover the cost of supplies, meals, and transportation. One mother whose children were assigned a "Family Friend" commented: "My boys have a wonderful, new, wise, and loving friend to learn from and look up to. In addition, I have a trusted and reliable companion to lean on, who helps ease the everyday difficulties."²²

Intergenerational connections need not be confined to children and grandparents. Students can be a bridge between the ages, and college campuses and schools can be the setting. Child-care and preschool programs also fit nicely into a collegiate setting. The Child Development Center in Buckhannon, West Virginia, on the campus of West Virginia Wesleyan College, does just that. During the past year, about sixty-five students spent more than fifteen hundred hours at the Center working with children. Kay Klauswitz, the director, commenting on the intergenerational impact of the program, observed that "the college students are wonderful at interacting with preschoolers and give them precisely the social and language structures that they need. The students, on the other hand, often discover little children for the first time . . . and become prepared, themselves, to be much better parents."

Students at Amherst College in Massachusetts have been invaluable to a local chapter of Parents Anonymous. Parents who seek support through Parents Anonymous are those who are overwhelmed by their parenting responsibilities and fear that their frustration and anger will be directed toward their children. Amherst students provide child-care services for the parents for two hours per week so they can attend Parents Anonymous meetings. The students also arrange to visit the families, interact with the young children, and help with cooking and cleaning. Recently, the freshman class adopted Parents Anonymous as *their* project, "taxing" themselves \$1.00 each to help finance the service efforts.

Teenagers especially can benefit from intergenerational programs, and from helping little children. At South Brunswick High School in New Jersey, students spend Wednesday afternoon in a preschool program and receive credit for working with young children in a variety of activities including recreation and reading. In Kansas City, Youth Volunteers offer year-round service programs involving school-aged children from elementary and secondary schools. Volunteers work in the school-based preschools as well as in a community-based nursery school for handicapped children. They read to children, talk to them, share their special interests and knowledge, and assist teachers with learning projects.

Middle-school students in Columbia, South Carolina, with United Way's Young America Cares program, are busy reaching out. Some students, for example, "adopted" preschool children in a housing project. The students read, bake, shop, and play with their younger friends and teach them the survival skills needed for growing up in

housing projects. The benefits derived from these interactions across the generations enrich both the givers and those who receive their attentions.

Looking down the road, America faces the grave risk of not bringing up children in ways that overcome racial and ethnic lines—and generational barriers, as well. We need to teach old and young how to cope with each other, with advocates from each group, instead of fighting over limited resources, affirming the deeper truth that the old and young really are dependent on each other.

The challenge, as we see it, is to create more intergenerational sharing in America with the old and young working together. Currently, "Generations United," based at the Child Welfare League of America in Washington, is a clearinghouse for intergenerational programs. Specifically, we urge that such a clearinghouse be expanded and a national organization take the lead in promoting intergenerational projects and informing retirees about the possibility of helping children. The goal should be to extend programs that give young children strong emotional attachments so they can discover who they are and where they fit, and can develop the strength and confidence needed to succeed in school, and in life.

Coming back to excellence in education, we believe that connections across the generations may be, when all is said and done, the real key to school reform. After all, a ready-to-learn campaign is not just about children, or schools, or even families. It's about fitting the pieces together, creating a true community of caring. And all of the ready-to-learn steps discussed in this report—from a healthy start to connections across the generations—are bound together by a renewed vision of concern, so we can become the kind of nation we want America to be—for ourselves, and most especially, for our children.

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Throughout the nation's history, Americans have shown their capacity to dedicate themselves to great causes, coming together in times of need, and responding with great vigor and an outpouring of concern. The Ready-to-Learn mandate presents the nation with yet another urgent call to action, a unique opportunity to think in more integrative ways and forge new bonds among disparate institutions. An Ohio kindergarten teacher put it well: "We have all become so separate, so specialized, so isolated! We need to stick together for all our children."¹

In this report we have covered a wide range of topics, from preschool care to retirement villages, issues that at first may appear wholly unrelated. But the thread of continuity that weaves it all together is the concern for children who desperately need to be cared for so they are fully prepared for school. And for this to be accomplished, we must learn to look at the child's world in its entirety, encompassing health, family, home, neighborhood, and community, the parent's workplace and child-care options, and the ubiquitous television. Further, we must be prepared to take action—now.

The ready-to-learn goal forces us to acknowledge the interrelatedness of all institutions: the home, health clinics, preschools, commercial centers, businesses, neighborhoods, television, and public and private agencies. But currently we do not have the structures, procedures, or forums that allow us to cross the fissures that separate sectors. As a result, children often fall through the cracks.

Clearly, to improve the readiness of children we *must* start looking at the whole of our society, the entirety of a child's learning, to see how we build a new, more integrative network of support. At the heart of our discussion, then, is a quest for learning that shifts our attention from buildings and institutions to a restructuring of the social web that supports the child.

The national education goals endorsed by the President and governors have received wide support. And at a time of few inspired visions, the ready-to-learn mandate, in particular, stirs aspirations and raises hopes. But we also sense a growing skepticism

in the country—a suspicion that we are being offered a slogan, not a serious call to action. There is a feeling that indeed the social pathologies are very deep, even intractable, and that when it comes to our most glaring social problems—those affecting children—little, if anything, can or will be done. What a tragedy it would be if this special moment of opportunity were squandered and fell victim to despair.

But the encouraging news is that while traveling around the country we have seen literally hundreds of programs for preschoolers—from health clinics to Head Start Centers to reading programs at libraries—creative activities designed to prepare youngsters successfully for school. The problem is that the current effort, with all of its energy and dedication, is so fragmented, so spotty—a series of ad hoc responses best described as “excellence by exception.” Model projects are scattered here and there, with no common strategy or shared vision of what we as a nation, together, can accomplish. Moreover many of the most effective projects are threatened because their funds are drying up.

The time has come to launch a national campaign, one that coordinates the ready-to-learn effort, builds on existing projects, starts new ones where needed, and makes sure all the pieces fit together so no child falls through the cracks. But for this to be accomplished—for the whole of the effort to be greater than the separate parts—national leadership is crucial. Those working at state and local levels must feel connected to a larger, consequential cause filled with vision and inspiration. How can others be asked to promote the ready-to-learn effort without leadership at the top, where this initiative began?

As a first step, the President and the Congress should give vigorous leadership to the Ready-to-Learn Campaign, spelling out precisely the role the federal government will play. Would it be possible, for example, for leaders in Washington to announce a time table for the full funding of Head Start? And could we have a clear plan detailing how and when basic health care for all poor mothers and their babies will be achieved? Certainly, the federal budget is tight. And surely there are other priorities to be met. But the nation's first education goal is perhaps, more than any other, inextricably linked to the nation's civic and economic future.

Second, to give overall leadership to the Ready-to-Learn Campaign, we suggest that a national nongovernmental Ready-to-Learn Center be established, to give visibility and leadership to the effort overall. For years, physical fitness has been promoted with the

help of a national office. Why not advance the nation's first education goal—fitness for formal learning—in a similar fashion? This new center, guided by a nonpartisan board, would bring together a dozen or so of the nation's major child advocacy organizations that could each play a key role in the school readiness campaign, in both the public and private sector.

The proposed National Ready-to-Learn Center also would act as a clearinghouse to monitor progress toward reaching the first goal in all fifty states. It would develop goals and timetables. It would prepare an annual "Readiness Report Card." It would celebrate successes by giving Ready-to-Learn Awards to model programs, perhaps at a White House ceremony. Such annual awards would honor projects in children's health, parent education, creative television, family-friendly worksites, neighborhoods for learning, and intergenerational programs—all of the strategies outlined in this report. The center would also coordinate a national ready-to-learn advertising campaign, perhaps through the National Advertising Council, to help support innovative programs and to recruit volunteers—both ordinary people and celebrities—to the cause.

Once national leadership is established, pieces can fall into place behind it. For example, each state should, we believe, assume responsibility for coordinating ready-to-learn initiatives throughout its jurisdiction. Specifically, we strongly urge every governor to establish a "School Readiness Division" in his or her office, to oversee all statewide preschool programs. This office would help integrate the programs and even the budgets of health, education, and child services in the state.

Ready-to-Learn goals should be established as well as provisions for assessment. Ultimately, it must be at the state level that the cracks in the system are plugged, institutions inspected, and seed money distributed to spark ready-to-learn initiatives in health, day care programs, parent education, and the like. Further, every state might also schedule an annual "Ready-to-Learn Celebration," an event hosted by the governor, one that would honor outstanding preschool programs in the state.

In the end, the Ready-to-Learn Campaign is, above all, a local effort. It must take root in homes, neighborhoods, businesses, schools, clinics, and day-care centers in every city and country. To make it work, each community needs a new coordinating body—called perhaps a "Ready-to-Learn Council"—which is the most critical part of the plan at this level.

If communities can come together to form "neighborhood watches" to protect their property, why can't they do the same to promote creative projects for preschool children? Just as the Board of Education looks after education, and Environmental Boards watch out for ecological interests, so the Ready-to-Learn Council would focus on the children. What good parents do for their children privately, the Ready-to-Learn Council would do at the public level. Members would be selected from agencies or institutions that affect the lives of children: health services, social services, the recreation department, the library, the park service, local planners and engineers, the local municipal authority, parent groups, religious groups, and certainly the school. We can imagine states being blanketed with these Councils. Each major city would have its own, and in rural areas they might be set up at the county level, or perhaps several counties might come together to form a larger district.

The first task of the Ready-to-Learn Council would be to take inventory of existing programs and propose new ones, perhaps by surveying the community to find out what both children themselves and parents feel are the strengths and weaknesses in their lives. This "needs assessment" would serve as the foundation for building a solid, comprehensive children's program. The very existence of such a council would help overcome distrust and would encourage cooperation on behalf of children. Agencies and individuals who have long guarded their turfs would come together to share their best programs and resources.

The Council also would act as a voice for children. The Ready-to-Learn Council, for example, might conduct a children's impact study or lobby at the local or state level to promote legislation affecting children and families. Further, the council might help organize a Ready-to-Learn cable television station in the community or establish Children's Service Centers in hard-hit neighborhoods.

How is this interagency effort to be organized? Who should take the lead?

Local United Ways might well take the lead in forming the Ready-to-Learn Councils, working closely with the Mayor's offices and other public and private agencies. The United Way is America's premier volunteer organization. It represents a community's most charitable impulses and already supports a host of first-rate programs for young children. Its participation has been important to the success of local coalitions. Moreover, the United Way of America's Board of Governors recently agreed that for the next two decades, the organization will target the first ten years of life and has created "Mobilization for America's Children" to promote local coalitions with a particular priority on learning readiness. Thus, it seems reasonable to suggest that 2,300 local United Ways spearhead a "Ready-to-Learn" effort in each community, at the grass-roots level—not to run programs, but to show the way, building on programs already in place.

United Way has played such a role with great success in Minneapolis where it launched the early childhood collaborative known as "Success by 6." This pioneering effort has rallied the support of the business community, educators, public officials, parents, service providers, and service recipients to help ensure that all children reach age six ready to learn. In partnership, these groups work to increase public awareness about the importance of healthy early development, to improve the scope and quality of services available to young children and their families, and influence public policy on behalf of children.

"Success by 6" succeeded in winning a strong legislative initiative for a comprehensive Children's Agenda, focusing on policy gaps affecting young children. This resulted in a \$35.6 million gain for young children in 1989. "Success by 6" initiatives have spread to almost fifty communities nationwide. "Collaboration is one major element you'll find in all programs," said Barbara Nagle, who works with the program in Minneapolis.³ "No one organization can do this alone, but all of the groups and agencies coming together can make a difference."

One Minneapolis program called "Way to Grow" is a collaborative venture promoting better prenatal care and getting pregnant women to social services that supply nutrition, health care, and parent education. It helps community groups develop better outreach. Partners have teamed up to present televised public-service announcements, posters, and flyers that promote prenatal care, for example. There is a local community forum to bring together health and education specialists to figure out ways they can better integrate their policies and services for children. There are workshops for families on cultural diversity, a parent directory of 250 resources for parents with low

reading skills, and a newsletter called "Kidbits" that describes neighborhood efforts. The Junior League of Minneapolis is working with "Success by 6" to develop programs for children with special needs and a support program for teen parents.³

"Success by 6" has also established two neighborhood centers in Minneapolis. One is called "the Northside Family Connection" and serves eighty-eight families. Seventeen healthy babies have been born in the neighborhood since the center began earlier in 1991. The other site is called "Phillips TLC" (which stands for "tender loving care" in the Phillips neighborhood) and has served 261 pregnant women in the first two years of the program with 99 percent of the infants born healthy in a neighborhood with a previously high infant-mortality rate.

"Success by 6" programs in other states are diversified: In Omaha, a summer school pre-kindergarten program readies young children for a successful first year of elementary school.⁴ In Nashville, Tennessee, there is a plan for the Health Department to provide prenatal care and immunizations to women in housing projects. Nashville also mailed "Tools for Success by 6," a variety of materials for parents.⁵

In other cities the entire community has come together on behalf of children. Consider Seattle. In 1983, the city's Junior League, YMCA, and the municipal officials started a civic effort called "KidsPlace". Among its first steps: it surveyed thousands of children to learn what *they* liked and disliked about their city and what they felt would make their hometown a better place. According to the children, parks were the city's most popular asset. Soon after the poll's release, Seattle voters approved a bond issue to renovate the city's playspaces. In another child-centered move, Seattle's aquarium built platforms and lowered display windows for the littlest visitors. The city also installed an emergency phone system for young callers that automatically shows their address.⁶

KidsPlace serves children from birth to high school. The principal goal is to create a child-friendly atmosphere within the city, letting families know that Seattle is a place that cherishes its children. The list of the city's achievements on behalf of children is a long one: A resource and referral center for child-care services, a public advisory committee to assure that low-income children get the health care services they need, longer hours at municipal recreation centers, flexible parental leave policies for city workers, and a new beach along Seattle's revamped waterfront. Also, zoning requirements were changed so that family day care is now permissible in city dwellings.

One of Seattle's crowning achievements each year is the celebration of "KidsDay", a week-long festival of events for children each October where museums, the zoo, performing arts centers, and even the transit system is free so that the city is accessible to all families.⁷ "Discovery Town" at the Children's Museum at the Seattle Center is part of the celebration aimed at preschoolers where they learn about a wide variety of things through hands-on exhibitions and programs—from farming to theatre to telecommunications.

KidsPlace began in the mayor's office, but has been incorporated as a nonprofit charitable organization. It has been credited with changing attitudes in Seattle. Through a project that is focused on its most precious resource, the city is not just improving the quality of life for children, it is also creating shared values and social bonds in the community at large. A \$56 million levy is now available for "Safety, Health, and Ready to Learn" issues in the city. The mayor's office reports that by focusing on the health and safety issues of youngsters, the schools can then better focus on "Ready to Learn."

In a similar vein, Minneapolis representatives from 150 agencies and organizations concerned with children's health, safety, and education launched a special effort called "City's Children: 2007." "The goal is to demonstrate a measurable change through the twenty years it takes for a new generation to grow up," Mayor Don Fraser said.

Central goals: full enrollment of all children in Head Start or a comparable program, afterschool and summer activities for all children, adolescent pregnancy-prevention efforts, the expansion of school-based health clinics, child care for teenaged parents, and youth employment opportunities.⁸ In addition, the city's business leaders are supporting summer interns who supervise and organize activities for little children in Minneapolis parks and playgrounds.

The Minneapolis program operates under the auspices of a Youth Coordinating Board, an intergovernmental agency that tries to integrate the efforts of all institutions and agencies in the city connected with children. Richard Mammen, the executive director, said, "Much of our energy is devoted to getting different agencies to discuss common language and values, then capturing opportunities as they arise. It has been a major accomplishment just getting these different service providers to come together and trade ideas, or work on a problem jointly. At least a forum now exists in which solutions become possible."

The agency is structured around eleven planning districts and eighty-one neighborhoods from which initiatives are developed at the grass-roots level. Each neighborhood organizes those services it needs. For example, some have set up teams of home visitors—paid staff members who live in the neighborhood—whose purpose is to help families in the neighborhood cope with problems. The home visitors may encourage women to get prenatal care, drive women to their doctor's appointments, or even pick up diapers at the store for a harried mother. They work with the visiting nurses and social workers, making referrals and then helping families get past the bureaucratic hurdles and tap into whatever programs exist. Two corporations, Honeywell and General Mills, have become partners in the initiative.

Minneapolis also plans the development of neighborhood "school readiness centers." These would be larger physical centers, places where day care, Head Start, kindergarten, and early childhood activities could be jointly held. "These centers would become the access point in every neighborhood for families to connect with services and more importantly each other", said Mammen, "recreating a natural support structure for the healthy development of children birth to age six".

"KidsPlace" in St. Louis takes great pains to point out what it is not. It is *not* a service provider, it is *not* a funding source, and it is *not* in competition with existing organizations. Rather, it seeks to focus the community on its children, to give voice to their concerns and address social issues. St. Louis, inspired by Seattle's success, also conducted a children's survey and the more than 70,000 responses revealed that St. Louis youngsters were concerned most about safety and drugs. Like other children, they also wanted better spaces for play, more places "to have fun." As a first step, KidsPlace organized an all-day "Downtown is KidsTown" to welcome children to the city. A "KidsMap" of St. Louis was prepared just for children, and two original theatrical productions commissioned for St. Louis children included a mix of ages in the actual productions.⁹

Indeed, the goodwill runs deep in the American conscience, and we are confident that with the right blend of commitment and imagination, communities can find innovative means to help children, strategies that will make a life-long difference. It's an investment in the nation's future that America can and must make. We recognize that almost every community is struggling to make ends meet. All across the country, towns and villages—and especially our cities—are facing fiscal woes, social fragmentation,

street crimes, congestion, lack of confidence in government—all of the frustrations that capture headlines and dampen hope.

Another bold, creative step in helping children has occurred in Palm Beach County, Florida, through an imaginative funding mechanism. Several years ago, local officials established a special taxing district to support programs for the young. Voters approved a property assessment, and the resulting funds were turned over to an independent government agency, called a Children's Services Council, which coordinates all programs for children. The ten-member council, after a county-wide survey, identified sixteen priorities—from reducing school dropout rates to improving child care. Thus far, nearly sixty projects for children and youth have been launched, including infant nurseries, parent programs, intervention programs for kids with special needs, and parent support groups.

Likewise, San Francisco recently found an innovative way to fund its children's projects. In a November 5 election, voters accepted Proposition J, which will guarantee a percentage of local spending for children's services.¹⁰ Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, an advocacy group in San Francisco, organized the lobbying effort and wrote the proposition now called the "children's amendment," which is supported by teacher and police unions, elderly groups, gay-rights organizations, and three of five mayoral candidates.¹¹ Considered a new way to safeguard children, the plan is expected to be replicated in other states. Rather than raise taxes, Proposition J amends the city charter, requiring the use of a portion of property-tax money for specific children's programs such as child care, tutoring, delinquency prevention, job training, health, and social services. The proposition guarantees the current level for children, about \$75 million a year, plus 1.25 percent of property taxes for youth services in the first year and 2.5 percent in each of the next nine years—thus an additional \$6 million in 1992-93 and \$13 million in later years. Children have become a priority for the whole city.

In the end, a National Ready-to-Learn Campaign must be *everybody's* business. It must engage people from many fields—nurses and physicians, preschool teachers, employers, television producers, librarians, those who run neighborhood parks, senior citizens, national leaders, and, of course, parents, who are at the core of children's life. And, of course, grandparents, teenagers, and college students can participate as volunteers or as trained staff. Every institution in the community can and should be actively brought into all aspects of the campaign. Only by extensively interweaving

these cross-community threads will the net of support for children be sufficiently strong to achieve the nation's first education goal we have set for ourselves.

But for everyone to work together on behalf of children, we need a common plan, a shared vision. While struggling to define a new domestic agenda for the nation, we must not forget the children. At the historic education summit in Charlottesville, Virginia, the President declared: "Let no child in America be forgotten or forsaken."¹² This is, when all is said and done, what "ready to learn" is all about.

NOTES

1. California State Department of Education, News Release, December 7, 1988.
2. Verbal communication with Barbara Nagle, Minneapolis United Way, November, 1991.
3. *Kidbits*, Success by 6 Newsletter, Minneapolis United Way, Fall 1991, 1.
4. Verbal communication with Susan Star, Minneapolis, November, 1991.
5. Verbal communication with Cecelia Mynatt, United Way of Middle Tennessee, Nashville, November, 1991.
6. Verbal communication, Laneyse Cipolla, November, 1991.
7. Verbal communication, Sherri Harris Smith, director, November, 1991.
8. Verbal communication, Richard Mammen, August and November, 1991.
9. Verbal communication, Blair Forlaw, November, 1991.
10. Scott Armstrong, "San Francisco Voters Test Children's Issues with 'Proposition J,'" *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 1, 1991, 1-2.
11. Verbal communication, Margaret Brodtkin, Coleman Advocates for Children, San Francisco, November, 1991.
12. President George Bush, "Exchange of Toasts by the President and Governor Terry Branstad," Monticello Mansion, Charlottesville, Virginia, September 27, 1989.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

READY TO LEARN

A Mandate for the Nation

What follows is a seven-step strategy to ensure learning readiness for all the nation's children. Taken together, the following recommendations comprise a comprehensive plan aimed at achieving the nation's number one education goal—by the year 2000, all children will come to school "ready to learn." The seven steps are:

- A HEALTHY START
- EMPOWERED PARENTS
- QUALITY PRESCHOOL
- A RESPONSIVE WORKPLACE
- TELEVISION AS TEACHER
- NEIGHBORHOODS FOR LEARNING
- CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

Step One: A HEALTHY START

Good health and good schooling are inextricably interlocked, and every child, to be ready to learn, must have a healthy birth, be well nourished, and well protected in the early years of life.

- *Today's students are tomorrow's parents; every school district should offer all students a new health course called "The Life Cycle," with study units threaded through every grade.*
- *The federal nutrition program for women, infants, and young children, known as WIC, should be fully funded so that every eligible mother and infant will be served.*
- *A network of neighborhood-based Ready-to-Learn Clinics should be established in every underserved community across the country to ensure access to basic health care for all mothers and preschool children.*
- *The National Health Service Corps should be expanded to ensure that a well-trained health and education team is available to staff the proposed clinics.*
- *Funding for two key federal health programs—Community and Migrant Health Centers, and Maternal and Child Block Grants—should be significantly increased.*
- *Every state should integrate the various federal, state, and local child health programs to ensure more efficient and more effective service.*

Step Two: EMPOWERED PARENTS

The home is the first classroom and parents are the first and most essential teachers; all children, as a readiness requirement, should live in a secure environment where empowered parents encourage language development.

- *Every child should live in a language-rich environment in which parents speak frequently to their children, listen carefully to their responses, answer questions, and read aloud to them every day.*
- *A comprehensive parent education program should be established in every state to guarantee that every mother and father of a preschool-age child has access to such a service.*
- *A national "Parent Education Guide," focusing on all dimensions of school readiness, should be prepared collaboratively by state departments of education and distributed widely to parents.*
- *A new "Ready-to-Learn Library Series," one with recommended books for preschoolers, should be prepared under the leadership of the American Library Association.*
- *Every school should organize a Preschool PTA—supported and encouraged by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers—to bring parents of young children together and to build a bridge between home and school.*

Step Three: QUALITY PRESCHOOL

Since many young children are cared for outside the home, high-quality preschool programs are required that not only provide good care, but also address all dimensions of school readiness.

- *Head Start should be designated by Congress as an entitlement program and be fully funded by 1995 to ensure that every eligible child will be served.*
- *Every school district in the nation should establish a preschool program as an optional service for all three- and four-year-olds not participating in Head Start.*
- *The new federal child-care initiative should be used by every state to start new programs that expand the quality of care for small children, especially in disadvantaged communities.*
- *A National Forum on Child Care Standards should be convened by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The Forum's recommendations should be adopted by all states, so that by the year 2000 every day-care center in the country is licensed to meet these standards.*
- *Every state should establish a new preschool division in the governor's office to better integrate health and human services, child care, and education.*
- *Every community college should make it a special priority to establish an associate degree called the Child Care Professional.*

Step Four: A RESPONSIVE WORKPLACE

If each child in America is to come to school ready to learn, we must have workplace policies that are family-friendly, that supply child-care services, and give parents time to be with their young children.

- *All employers should make at least twelve weeks of unpaid leave available to parents of newborn or adopted children, to allow time for the bonding that is so essential to emotional well-being.*
- *Flexible scheduling and job sharing should be available to employees to help them better balance work and family obligations.*
- *Parents of preschool children should be given at least two parenting days off each year, with pay, to visit with their children in day-care and preschool programs and consult with teachers.*
- *All employers should help their workers gain access to high-quality child-care and preschool services, either on-site or at local centers. A child-care information and referral service also should be available to workers.*
- *A center to help employers promote family-work policies should be established by the National Alliance of Business.*

Step Five: TELEVISION AS TEACHER

Next to parents, television is the child's most influential teacher. School readiness requires television programming that is both educational and enriching.

- *Each of the major commercial networks—CBS, NBC, ABC, and Fox—should offer, at an appropriate time, at least one hour of preschool educational programming every week.*
- *A "Ready-to-Learn Television Guide" should be prepared. This guide should list programs on both commercial and cable channels that have special educational value for young children.*
- *Companies producing and selling products geared to young children—toys, breakfast cereals, fast foods—should sponsor quality educational television for pre schoolers.*
- *Every hour of children's programming on commercial networks should include at least one sixty-second "Ready-to-Learn Commercial" that focuses on the physical, social, or educational needs of children.*
- *Twenty million dollars should be appropriated immediately to the National Endowment for Children's Educational Television to support the creation of educational programs for preschoolers. By 1995, this funding should be increased to \$100 million.*
- *A "Ready-to-Learn" Cable Channel should be established to offer programming aimed exclusively at the educational needs and interests of preschool children.*
- *A National Conference on Children's Television should be convened to bring together broadcast executives, corporate sponsors, educators, and children's advocates to design a decade-long school-readiness television strategy.*

Step Six: NEIGHBORHOODS FOR LEARNING

All children need spaces and places for growth and exploration. Safe and friendly neighborhoods will contribute to a child's readiness to learn.

- *A network of well-designed outdoor and indoor parks should be created in every community to give preschoolers opportunities for exercise and exploration.*
- *"Street playgrounds" should be established in every urban area to make open spaces for creative play and learning immediately available to children.*
- *Every library, museum, and zoo should establish a School Readiness Program for preschoolers. The funding of such services should be given top priority.*
- *Every major shopping mall should include in its facility a "Ready-to-Learn Center," an inviting, creative space where young children can engage in play and learning.*
- *A "Youth Service Corps" should be organized to make it possible for school and college students to serve as volunteers in children's Ready-to-Learn Centers, libraries, and playgrounds in every community.*

Step Seven: CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

To be ready to learn in the richest, fullest sense, connections across the generations are needed to give children a sense of security and continuity in communities of caring.

- *Schools, day-care centers, and retirement villages should redesign their programs to bring young and old together, building bridges across the generations.*
- *A "Grandteacher Program" should be created in communities across the country, one in which older people participate as mentors in day care centers and preschools.*
- *Every community should organize a series of intergenerational projects—called "Grand Days" perhaps—in which senior citizens engage in activities and excursions with young children.*
- *A national "intergenerational" clearinghouse should be established to promote and publicize projects that bring young and old together.*

APPENDIX A

Table A-1

School Readiness:
Percentage of Students Not
Ready to Participate Successfully

ALL TEACHERS	35%
Alabama	36%
Alaska	34
Arizona	35
Arkansas	42
California	38
Colorado	32
Connecticut	24
Delaware	42
Florida	38
Georgia	41
Hawaii	47
Idaho	26
Illinois	31
Indiana	32
Iowa	25
Kansas	27
Kentucky	40
Louisiana	39
Maine	30
Maryland	31
Massachusetts	26
Michigan	27
Minnesota	24
Mississippi	41
Missouri	33
Montana	28
Nebraska	29
Nevada	39
New Hampshire	29
New Jersey	27
New Mexico	40
New York	36
North Carolina	39
North Dakota	23
Ohio	33
Oklahoma	40
Oregon	32
Pennsylvania	29
Rhode Island	40
South Carolina	40
South Dakota	29
Tennessee	39
Texas	37
Utah	26
Vermont	28
Virginia	34
Washington	33
West Virginia	34
Wisconsin	32
Wyoming	26

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-2

Language Richness:
How Serious a Problem Was Language Richness for
Those Students Who Entered School Not Ready to Learn?

	NO PROBLEM	SLIGHT PROBLEM	MODERATE PROBLEM	SERIOUS PROBLEM
ALL TEACHERS	2%	10%	37%	51%
Alabama	1%	12%	39%	48%
Alaska	2	17	27	54
Arizona	2	7	40	51
Arkansas	1	4	35	60
California	2	12	31	56
Colorado	2	13	35	50
Connecticut	0	11	46	43
Delaware	0	4	29	67
Florida	0	5	42	53
Georgia	1	4	31	64
Hawaii	0	4	37	59
Idaho	3	22	33	42
Illinois	3	10	39	48
Indiana	1	10	35	55
Iowa	2	15	48	35
Kansas	2	11	42	45
Kentucky	1	8	36	55
Louisiana	3	6	35	56
Maine	3	10	45	41
Maryland	1	8	43	48
Massachusetts	3	14	42	41
Michigan	3	12	42	43
Minnesota	1	13	52	33
Mississippi	1	8	33	59
Missouri	2	7	43	48
Montana	4	19	39	38
Nebraska	2	11	38	49
Nevada	1	10	45	45
New Hampshire	2	11	45	42
New Jersey	3	12	44	42
New Mexico	2	9	41	48
New York	1	12	40	47
North Carolina	2	10	31	57
North Dakota	6	22	43	28
Ohio	1	8	30	61
Oklahoma	1	16	38	45
Oregon	2	13	40	45
Pennsylvania	2	10	34	54
Rhode Island	0	11	23	66
South Carolina	0	7	27	66
South Dakota	2	11	40	48
Tennessee	1	11	34	54
Texas	1	13	35	50
Utah	1	18	50	32
Vermont	1	16	40	43
Virginia	2	7	35	56
Washington	0	13	38	49
West Virginia	1	12	27	60
Wisconsin	4	12	41	44
Wyoming	4	12	48	36

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-3

Emotional Maturity:
How Serious a Problem Was Emotional Maturity for
Those Students Who Entered School Not Ready to Learn?

	NO PROBLEM	SLIGHT PROBLEM	MODERATE PROBLEM	SERIOUS PROBLEM
ALL TEACHERS	2%	12%	43%	43%
Alabama	2%	10%	47%	41%
Alaska	2	17	48	33
Arizona	1	19	41	39
Arkansas	2	15	51	32
California	2	11	43	45
Colorado	2	10	44	44
Connecticut	0	16	40	44
Delaware	0	8	53	39
Florida	1	10	41	48
Georgia	0	14	45	41
Hawaii	2	15	52	31
Idaho	3	17	45	36
Illinois	1	14	54	30
Indiana	1	12	45	41
Iowa	2	16	50	32
Kansas	0	11	47	42
Kentucky	2	14	45	39
Louisiana	2	12	43	43
Maine	1	12	42	45
Maryland	1	15	35	49
Massachusetts	1	7	43	49
Michigan	3	9	41	47
Minnesota	2	11	46	42
Mississippi	2	13	48	37
Missouri	0	15	47	38
Montana	2	14	44	39
Nebraska	2	17	44	38
Nevada	1	12	42	45
New Hampshire	2	11	35	52
New Jersey	4	11	44	41
New Mexico	3	13	47	37
New York	0	11	49	40
North Carolina	1	12	45	43
North Dakota	5	11	47	37
Ohio	1	6	46	47
Oklahoma	0	12	46	43
Oregon	1	11	41	48
Pennsylvania	0	13	35	51
Rhode Island	0	11	43	46
South Carolina	1	15	51	32
South Dakota	2	10	49	39
Tennessee	2	17	35	46
Texas	4	15	39	42
Utah	2	19	44	36
Vermont	1	14	48	37
Virginia	1	12	41	46
Washington	1	14	41	44
West Virginia	2	12	41	45
Wisconsin	4	17	37	42
Wyoming	3	21	36	40

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-4

General Knowledge:
How Serious a Problem Was General Knowledge for
Those Students Who Entered School Not Ready to Learn?

	NO PROBLEM	SLIGHT PROBLEM	MODERATE PROBLEM	SERIOUS PROBLEM
ALL TEACHERS	2%	15%	45%	38%
Alabama	3%	13%	44%	40%
Alaska	2	23	40	35
Arizona	5	15	48	32
Arkansas	0	12	51	38
California	2	13	41	45
Colorado	4	16	45	36
Connecticut	3	17	46	34
Delaware	0	6	39	55
Florida	0	20	42	38
Georgia	0	12	41	47
Hawaii	1	10	50	39
Idaho	4	22	45	29
Illinois	2	15	44	39
Indiana	2	11	49	39
Iowa	4	17	54	24
Kansas	2	15	50	33
Kentucky	1	8	51	41
Louisiana	3	15	37	45
Maine	8	16	48	27
Maryland	2	14	46	39
Massachusetts	2	27	43	28
Michigan	5	22	45	28
Minnesota	1	25	46	28
Mississippi	2	9	49	40
Missouri	3	11	48	39
Montana	6	20	49	25
Nebraska	4	20	45	31
Nevada	3	14	39	44
New Hampshire	2	23	51	25
New Jersey	4	21	47	28
New Mexico	3	15	40	42
New York	2	18	47	32
North Carolina	1	13	48	37
North Dakota	5	23	50	23
Ohio	3	11	46	40
Oklahoma	1	15	50	34
Oregon	4	17	43	36
Pennsylvania	4	22	41	34
Rhode Island	0	23	34	43
South Carolina	1	7	46	46
South Dakota	2	20	47	31
Tennessee	1	14	41	44
Texas	3	13	46	39
Utah	1	18	49	32
Vermont	6	21	46	27
Virginia	1	14	43	42
Washington	1	18	54	27
West Virginia	0	17	43	40
Wisconsin	3	19	44	34
Wyoming	8	19	45	28

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-5

Social Confidence:
How Serious a Problem Was Social Confidence for
Those Students Who Entered School Not Ready to Learn?

	NO PROBLEM	SLIGHT PROBLEM	MODERATE PROBLEM	SERIOUS PROBLEM
ALL TEACHERS	2%	19%	49%	31%
Alabama	3%	19%	46%	31%
Alaska	1	20	51	28
Arizona	1	14	48	37
Arkansas	1	20	55	24
California	3	19	47	31
Colorado	1	9	49	41
Connecticut	1	18	47	34
Delaware	0	13	62	25
Florida	1	20	45	34
Georgia	1	16	54	29
Hawaii	1	17	53	29
Idaho	4	21	53	22
Illinois	1	22	48	30
Indiana	1	22	47	30
Iowa	2	24	42	31
Kansas	1	20	49	30
Kentucky	1	15	49	36
Louisiana	2	18	41	40
Maine	1	20	53	27
Maryland	0	14	58	28
Massachusetts	0	14	59	27
Michigan	2	12	52	34
Minnesota	1	18	52	29
Mississippi	3	20	47	29
Missouri	2	21	53	25
Montana	4	24	49	24
Nebraska	2	17	44	36
Nevada	2	24	51	24
New Hampshire	0	15	52	33
New Jersey	3	25	46	26
New Mexico	4	21	51	24
New York	2	18	53	27
North Carolina	2	15	43	39
North Dakota	5	14	57	25
Ohio	3	13	54	30
Oklahoma	1	21	51	26
Oregon	0	15	51	34
Pennsylvania	2	16	50	31
Rhode Island	0	17	47	36
South Carolina	3	15	48	34
South Dakota	3	17	53	27
Tennessee	1	22	41	36
Texas	1	23	45	31
Utah	1	30	46	22
Vermont	3	18	51	28
Virginia	1	10	57	32
Washington	0	16	46	39
West Virginia	1	22	49	28
Wisconsin	2	18	47	32
Wyoming	2	26	48	24

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-6

Moral Awareness:
How Serious a Problem Was Moral Awareness for
Those Students Who Entered School Not Ready to Learn?

	NO PROBLEM	SLIGHT PROBLEM	MODERATE PROBLEM	SERIOUS PROBLEM
ALL TEACHERS	10%	30%	39%	21%
Alabama	7%	30%	42%	21%
Alaska	16	29	39	16
Arizona	15	34	34	18
Arkansas	6	29	45	19
California	13	26	39	22
Colorado	9	24	42	25
Connecticut	20	31	34	14
Delaware	10	25	48	17
Florida	7	18	42	33
Georgia	5	27	44	24
Hawaii	8	34	48	10
Idaho	13	38	36	12
Illinois	13	40	31	16
Indiana	9	34	40	17
Iowa	11	37	34	18
Kansas	13	33	42	12
Kentucky	5	29	42	24
Louisiana	7	20	48	25
Maine	11	35	39	15
Maryland	8	33	37	22
Massachusetts	16	25	37	22
Michigan	13	30	42	15
Minnesota	10	36	41	14
Mississippi	9	22	35	35
Missouri	10	26	37	27
Montana	18	39	33	10
Nebraska	13	31	34	22
Nevada	15	22	43	21
New Hampshire	13	38	38	11
New Jersey	18	30	39	13
New Mexico	8	40	38	14
New York	10	34	38	17
North Carolina	6	24	37	33
North Dakota	19	35	31	15
Ohio	11	25	44	20
Oklahoma	7	38	34	20
Oregon	12	32	42	14
Pennsylvania	7	36	39	18
Rhode Island	13	33	39	15
South Carolina	5	35	34	26
South Dakota	13	37	35	14
Tennessee	10	24	42	24
Texas	7	31	38	24
Utah	12	35	38	16
Vermont	17	40	30	13
Virginia	11	30	41	18
Washington	11	32	45	13
West Virginia	15	38	33	14
Wisconsin	10	31	37	22
Wyoming	16	39	27	18

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-7

Physical Well-Being:
How Serious a Problem Was Physical Well-Being for
Those Students Who Entered School Not Ready to Learn?

	NO PROBLEM	SLIGHT PROBLEM	MODERATE PROBLEM	SERIOUS PROBLEM
ALL TEACHERS	26%	40%	27%	6%
Alabama	32%	40%	25%	3%
Alaska	22	43	27	9
Arizona	23	37	31	9
Arkansas	15	44	36	5
California	18	42	31	9
Colorado	24	37	31	8
Connecticut	39	33	25	3
Delaware	13	60	23	4
Florida	21	38	34	7
Georgia	22	39	31	8
Hawaii	37	44	16	2
Idaho	17	51	25	7
Illinois	36	37	24	3
Indiana	29	37	30	4
Iowa	33	41	24	2
Kansas	27	42	26	5
Kentucky	20	40	31	10
Louisiana	31	33	32	4
Maine	28	36	28	8
Maryland	29	45	22	3
Massachusetts	39	35	24	3
Michigan	29	39	26	5
Minnesota	27	47	19	6
Mississippi	27	41	29	3
Missouri	18	51	26	5
Montana	31	39	25	6
Nebraska	32	37	22	9
Nevada	29	31	33	7
New Hampshire	24	45	26	5
New Jersey	44	34	19	3
New Mexico	21	42	28	9
New York	31	34	31	4
North Carolina	23	47	25	5
North Dakota	41	43	15	1
Ohio	28	41	24	7
Oklahoma	25	48	25	3
Oregon	20	30	39	11
Pennsylvania	34	41	23	2
Rhode Island	33	33	24	9
South Carolina	21	51	23	5
South Dakota	28	33	30	9
Tennessee	29	43	25	4
Texas	28	42	25	5
Utah	33	50	11	6
Vermont	28	33	30	9
Virginia	31	42	23	3
Washington	15	41	35	10
West Virginia	21	45	24	10
Wisconsin	24	43	29	4
Wyoming	39	28	24	9

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-8

Five-Year Change:
How Does the Readiness of Your Students Compare to Five Years Ago?

	FEWER READY TO LEARN	ABOUT THE SAME	MORE READY TO LEARN
ALL TEACHERS	43%	33%	25%
Alabama	38%	28%	35%
Alaska	48	27	25
Arizona	42	34	25
Arkansas	44	29	27
California	53	32	15
Colorado	47	32	21
Connecticut	40	38	22
Delaware	35	53	12
Florida	52	22	26
Georgia	41	29	30
Hawaii	38	43	20
Idaho	34	38	29
Illinois	35	27	38
Indiana	35	35	30
Iowa	38	42	20
Kansas	40	36	24
Kentucky	35	27	38
Louisiana	32	27	41
Maine	49	36	15
Maryland	40	38	22
Massachusetts	35	44	21
Michigan	39	39	22
Minnesota	41	34	25
Mississippi	34	36	30
Missouri	39	28	33
Montana	34	43	23
Nebraska	49	38	13
Nevada	48	28	24
New Hampshire	37	30	33
New Jersey	38	35	28
New Mexico	37	39	25
New York	46	35	19
North Carolina	49	32	19
North Dakota	27	37	36
Ohio	46	32	22
Oklahoma	54	30	17
Oregon	47	35	18
Pennsylvania	35	36	29
Rhode Island	55	21	24
South Carolina	49	26	25
South Dakota	41	37	23
Tennessee	46	30	25
Texas	37	35	27
Utah	30	36	34
Vermont	30	39	31
Virginia	29	33	38
Washington	44	40	16
West Virginia	35	36	29
Wisconsin	56	27	18
Wyoming	34	37	28

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-9

Which One of the Following Goals Is the Most Important?

	IMPROVE: PARENT EDUCATION	MORE FUNDING FOR PRESCHOOLS	DECREASE TV VIEWING	BETTER HEALTH SERVICES	MORE WORKPLACE POLICIES	SAFER NEIGHBOR- HOODS	OTHER
ALL TEACHERS	64%	16%	5%	1%	5%	2%	7%
Alabama	76%	13%	1%	1%	4%	1%	4%
Alaska	59	11	9	0	8	0	13
Arizona	57	19	3	3	7	1	11
Arkansas	68	18	3	0	5	1	5
California	56	21	4	2	2	2	13
Colorado	66	10	5	2	8	2	8
Connecticut	61	14	10	0	6	3	7
Delaware	75	10	2	0	6	2	6
Florida	67	16	4	1	5	3	5
Georgia	66	20	0	1	7	1	3
Hawaii	66	24	2	0	4	1	3
Idaho	65	12	8	1	8	1	6
Illinois	67	13	7	1	5	2	4
Indiana	58	17	6	2	10	0	7
Iowa	62	17	10	1	4	1	5
Kansas	64	15	7	1	3	1	8
Kentucky	67	19	3	0	5	0	6
Louisiana	53	24	2	0	7	2	12
Maine	64	14	7	2	5	0	9
Maryland	58	16	7	1	5	1	12
Massachusetts	49	20	7	2	5	5	13
Michigan	72	12	4	1	4	1	6
Minnesota	58	16	10	1	9	0	7
Mississippi	78	13	3	0	3	1	3
Missouri	66	8	8	1	8	1	8
Montana	73	9	6	0	6	0	6
Nebraska	63	14	6	0	9	0	6
Nevada	64	10	10	2	6	0	8
New Hampshire	65	13	3	2	7	2	8
New Jersey	64	15	7	2	4	2	7
New Mexico	61	18	1	1	6	1	11
New York	62	15	5	3	8	1	6
North Carolina	64	18	3	1	5	1	8
North Dakota	57	13	9	0	10	0	11
Ohio	62	15	4	1	7	1	10
Oklahoma	67	10	8	3	4	1	7
Oregon	54	13	7	2	7	1	15
Pennsylvania	64	16	4	0	7	3	7
Rhode Island	61	5	14	2	7	2	9
South Carolina	67	23	2	0	4	0	4
South Dakota	63	16	8	1	6	1	6
Tennessee	66	13	4	1	4	1	11
Texas	72	13	5	0	5	3	3
Utah	65	9	10	3	3	2	8
Vermont	68	14	6	3	6	2	2
Virginia	61	21	3	1	7	1	5
Washington	62	17	6	3	4	2	6
West Virginia	66	19	3	1	4	1	7
Wisconsin	66	13	4	0	6	4	8
Wyoming	70	15	3	0	5	0	7

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-10

Class Size:
Full-Day Kindergarten

ALL TEACHERS	23%
Alabama	20%
Alaska	25
Arizona	24
Arkansas	20
California	27
Colorado	25
Connecticut	21
Delaware	11
Florida	25
Georgia	22
Hawaii	24
Idaho	26
Illinois	25
Indiana	25
Iowa	24
Kansas	24
Kentucky	21
Louisiana	23
Maine	18
Maryland	24
Massachusetts	23
Michigan	30
Minnesota	25
Mississippi	25
Missouri	23
Montana	17
Nebraska	22
Nevada	31
New Hampshire	16
New Jersey	22
New Mexico	21
New York	24
North Carolina	26
North Dakota	19
Ohio	26
Oklahoma	22
Oregon	30
Pennsylvania	24
Rhode Island	22
South Carolina	27
South Dakota	21
Tennessee	24
Texas	20
Utah	47
Vermont	13
Virginia	23
Washington	26
West Virginia	23
Wisconsin	24
Wyoming	17

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-11

Class Size:
A.M. Kindergarten

ALL TEACHERS	23%
Alabama	20%
Alaska	23
Arizona	23
Arkansas	20
California	29
Colorado	24
Connecticut	20
Delaware	21
Florida	22
Georgia	12
Hawaii	NA
Idaho	22
Illinois	23
Indiana	21
Iowa	23
Kansas	20
Kentucky	23
Louisiana	18
Maine	17
Maryland	23
Massachusetts	21
Michigan	23
Minnesota	24
Mississippi	24
Missouri	23
Montana	19
Nebraska	22
Nevada	26
New Hampshire	19
New Jersey	21
New Mexico	18
New York	21
North Carolina	NA
North Dakota	21
Ohio	24
Oklahoma	20
Oregon	22
Pennsylvania	23
Rhode Island	22
South Carolina	25
South Dakota	21
Tennessee	21
Texas	21
Utah	27
Vermont	16
Virginia	21
Washington	23
West Virginia	18
Wisconsin	22
Wyoming	21

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

Table A-12

Class Size:
P.M. Kindergarten

ALL TEACHERS	22%
Alabama	NA
Alaska	23%
Arizona	22
Arkansas	19
California	30
Colorado	23
Connecticut	19
Delaware	20
Florida	23
Georgia	10
Hawaii	22
Idaho	21
Illinois	23
Indiana	20
Iowa	22
Kansas	20
Kentucky	22
Louisiana	NA
Maine	18
Maryland	22
Massachusetts	21
Michigan	23
Minnesota	23
Mississippi	24
Missouri	23
Montana	20
Nebraska	21
Nevada	25
New Hampshire	18
New Jersey	20
New Mexico	18
New York	21
North Carolina	27
North Dakota	23
Ohio	24
Oklahoma	20
Oregon	22
Pennsylvania	22
Rhode Island	21
South Carolina	24
South Dakota	22
Tennessee	NA
Texas	21
Utah	26
Vermont	16
Virginia	21
Washington	22
West Virginia	18
Wisconsin	22
Wyoming	20

SOURCE: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers, 1991.

APPENDIX B

TECHNICAL NOTES

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's *1991 National Survey of Kindergarten Teachers* was administered by The Wirthlin Group of McLean, Virginia. The purpose of this research effort was to ask kindergarten teachers to record their opinions regarding the readiness of children who entered their classes in the fall of 1990. Questionnaires were mailed to 20,684 kindergarten teachers in all fifty states in August of 1991. Responses were received from 7,141 teachers, which represents a completion rate of 34.5 percent.

A stratified random sample design was used for this survey. Teachers' names were drawn from alphabetized lists of public school kindergarten teachers employed in each state. Market Data Retrieval of Shelton, Connecticut, maintains the lists, which include the names of approximately 75 percent of all public school teachers in the United States.

Using a fixed sample size from each state does not allow for differences between states in terms of the total population of kindergarten teachers. A weighting scheme was developed so that the survey response would represent the relative numbers of teachers in the fifty states.

The results of any sample survey are subject to sampling variations. The magnitude of the variations is measurable, and it is affected by a number of factors, including the number of completed questionnaires and the level of percentages expressing the results.

The *Survey of Fifth and Eighth Graders* was administered in the Fall of 1988 by The Carnegie Foundation. Questionnaires were completed by 2,750 fifth grade students and 2,906 eighth grade students. They were asked to respond to questions about their preferences for school subjects, coping with personal problems, feelings about the environments in which they live, and participation in activities beyond the classroom.

The Carnegie Foundation conducted the *Survey of Kindergarten Parents* in the Fall of 1987. Almost 2,000 parents answered questions about the preschool experience, the kindergarten curriculum, the habits of young children, and policies related to the care of young children.

For additional information on the data presented in this report, contact The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 5 Ivy Lane, Princeton, NJ 08540.